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FROM MIDSHIPMAN TO COMMODORE

OR
THE GLORIES
OF
OUR INFANT NAVY

BY FRANK
SHERIDAN

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May 1910

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From Midshipman to Commodore	By Frank Sheridan.
The Cruise of the Essex	By Frank Sheridan.



"Between two men each of the prisoners marched to the river."
(See page 36)

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OR

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BY

FRANK SHERIDAN

AUTHOR OF

"The Cruise of the Essex," "Dashing Paul Jones," etc.



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By **NORMAN L. MUNRO**

From Midshipman to Commodore

FROM MIDSHIPMAN TO COMMODORE.

CHAPTER I.

"CAPTAIN DICK."

A merry crowd of youngsters stood in the old Quaker burial ground in Philadelphia one hot summer day in the year 1793. The boys had just escaped from the dull routine of the day's lessons, which had kept them employed at the Rev. Dr. Abercrombie's Episcopal school opposite the burial ground.

These boys were history makers.

Their names are enshrined in our national life, and the liberty we enjoy to-day was in a large measure obtained for us by them.

"Charley, what is to be the fun?" asked a ruddy-faced boy.

"Ask Capt. Dick," was Charles Stewart's rejoinder.

"I vote we fight the English."

"I say let us join the French and lick the saucy John Bull."

"And I say again leave it to Decatur."

The boy referred to, a rather thin, but wiry youth, had been standing by himself, thinking.

"Come here, Capt. Dick, what pleasure shall beguile our moments of leisure?" said Francis Gurney Smith, in the stilted language of good society in those days.

Stephen Decatur had so often taken the lead in the boyish sports of the school that he had been named

"Capt. Dick" by them, a nickname which stuck to him all through his school days.

"What do you want to do, Mopsy?"

"Now, that is spoken like a good captain. Get to know what his men would like, and then give it to them," replied Hamilton, to whom Decatur had applied the undignified nickname of Mopsy.

"If you want me to decide, I say a good swim," Capt. Dick replied.

"Capt. Dick, you are an amphibious mortal; there's a long word for you, a word which would please old Abercrombie."

"Why do you call me amphibious?"

"Because you are never so happy as when in, or on, the water."

"Is there any wonder, Stewart? I love the water, I adore the sea. My father is a sailor, and more glorious than that, he fought the British and made the old flag salute the new one."

"Tell us about it, Capt. Dick."

"Boys, you have heard me tell so often, that——"

"It does one good to hear it again," interjected Stewart.

"The story I like best is that one about the *Royal Louis*," said Rush.

"Yes, tell us again about the *Royal Louis*."

The boys gathered round the young story-teller, and at his suggestion they threw themselves on the green-sward which covered the remains of some old member of the Society of Friends. It seemed strange to tell war stories in a Quaker burial ground, but the spot was the favorite resort of the schoolboys.

"You know my father loved the sea, and he loved this country more than any other, so when trouble arose with England he asked permission to take a hand in the fray.

"The *Royal Louis* was a trim little craft, and my

father owned a part interest in her, so when he offered to fight the foe on the raging main he said that the *Royal Louis* would haul down many a Union Jack of old England.

"Well, boys, you know that father did get the permission he wanted and he set sail, with a good boat under his feet, and a long gun which he knew how to use.

"When two weeks out father saw an English frigate lying off his port quarter. Father looked at her through his glass and saw that she was well armed, but that only made the contest more exciting.

"He called his crew on deck and pointed to the English frigate.

"'We are going to engage that frigate at once, and that flag must be hauled down,' said my father, and his men cried out that they were ready to do or die with him.

"The drum beat, and the enemy heard the rat-tat-to, and a sudden change was observed. The yards rose like magic to the heads of the topmast, and the courses dropped to the deck and were sheeted home.

"The long gun was cast loose and loaded to the muzzle.

"'Gurney,' said my father, 'hit that frigate's foremast right on the heel!' The man at the wheel threw the vessel to the wind to steady her while the gunner was taking aim. The shot struck just where it was wanted and down went the mast.

"The enemy fired, but his guns were too short-ranged, and so every shot the *Royal Louis* fired made the Englishman quiver so much that before long down came the Union Jack and up went the white flag of surrender. It was a glorious event."

Capt. Dick had told the story so often that he had it pretty pat, and could narrate it as well as if he were reading it from the newspaper.

"Bravo, Capt. Dick!" cried Stewart, "I wish I had such a chance as your father had."

"We'll get one, never fear, for the French are fighting the English and we may join them."

"I hope I'll be big enough to take a hand."

"So do I."

Those were days when even the youngest child talked politics. The favorite games were mimic wars between the Americans and English, and every boy wished he had been born early enough to have taken part in the Revolutionary war.

"Now, then, fellows, what say you to a swim?"

"We are ready to follow where Capt. Dick leads," answered Charles Stewart.

On a quick run the boys scampered through the streets to Kensington, then the northern extremity of the city, and in a few minutes all of them were undressed and splashing in the waters of the Delaware.

Decatur led the way to Windmill Island, and circumnavigated it by swimming and wading along its eastern shore to its southern extremity, thence again into the broad stream, and crossed it, making good their landing in a grove below the site of the navy yard.

Decatur was always leader in these swimming excursions, and the boys never cried "tired" so long as he was with them.

After a rest Dick called on his companions to swim down to a ship moored just below, so that they might dive from her side.

The boys loved the fun, and Dick laughed and shouted with boyish glee as one after another dived from the deck.

Then, actuated by a sudden impulse, he ran up the bowsprit quite out to the tip end of the jib boom, from which he instantly plunged headforemost into the stream.

The sailors were amazed, for the height was great,

but up came Decatur, smiling and as jolly as a boy could be.

A boy had been engaged to mind their clothes in the grove, and as it was getting late they dressed and started back to the city.

Somers and Gurney were so stiff that they could scarcely walk, but Decatur and Stewart only laughed at them and walked a little faster.

CHAPTER II.

"FATHER, GOD LOVES THAT FLAG."

"Mopsy, what do you see?" asked Stephen Decatur, as he neared his house one Saturday afternoon, his fishing rod over his shoulder and his basket on his arm.

Hamilton looked in the direction pointed out by Capt. Dick, and replied:

"Looks very much as though your esteemed mother was engaged in an altercation."

"I thought so; let us run."

The boys did not allow the grass to grow under their feet as they ran down Front Street, where the Decatur family lived.

A drunken man, whose family was one of the best in the city, had walked past the house, and young Decatur, a wee mite ten years old, had mimicked his staggering gait, when the tipsy man turned and struck the child a savage blow.

John screamed with pain and fright, and his mother ran out of the house and caught her little one in her arms.

"For shame, Thomas Mann, to strike a child. Have you no manhood, no honor?"

"The brat deserved it."

"He is only a baby, you a strong man. If he did wrong, why did you not complain to me, you drunken reprobate?"

"Drunken? Who do you call drunken? Put down that child and I will teach him a lesson that he will never forget."

"It is a good thing Capt. Decatur is not at home, or he would not allow you to insult me and strike his child."

Stephen thought the man was about to strike his mother and that was more than he could endure.

Throwing down his rod and basket and bidding Hamilton look after them, he sprang to his mother's side.

"Do you know who this lady is, sir? She is my mother and must be treated with respect!"

"I don't know who she is, nor do I care."

"What did my brother do to you?"

"You mind your own business, or I'll make you."

Capt. Dick did not lose his patience, but with dignity added:

"If you have any complaint to make against my brother, sir, make it to me."

Thomas Mann was now furious. He knew he was a coward and hated himself, but the rum maddened him and he made a blow at Stephen.

The boy parried the blow, and struck back so vigorously that Mann fell with violence on the pavement and was seriously injured.

Mrs. Decatur, full of womanly sympathy, knelt over the injured man and told Stephen he had done wrong.

"The poor fellow did not know what he was doing, he was tipsy."

"Mother mine, you need not feel sorry, for he deserved it all."

Hamilton had stood watching the actions of his friend with boyish enthusiasm. He clapped his hands when Mann fell and patted Stephen on the back, praising his pluck.

"A boy who would allow his mother to be insulted ought not to live!" exclaimed Stephen, with warmth.

The drunken man did not move, and Hamilton was afraid he was dead; he whispered his fears to Decatur, but that young hero was not in the humor to feel any compunction over the blow he had struck.

"He lives on the next square, down Cedar Street; let us carry him home."

Decatur took the man's shoulders and Hamilton his feet, and in this fashion carried the drunken reprobate to the steps of his house, where they deposited him, leaving others to restore him to sobriety.

This little episode in the early life of Commodore Decatur, the great champion of our glorious Stars and Stripes, shows how chivalrous was his nature and how strong to resent an insult to those he loved.

The following Saturday Decatur, Hamilton and Stewart had been fishing at Hollander's Creek, and were returning highly elated with their success, when outside the Buck's Head tavern they saw a crowd of cheering men and women.

The French tricolor waved from the window of the tavern, and the people wore tricolor cockades in honor of the French republic.

The tavern was the headquarters of a political society which had for its object the advocacy of a combination with the French republic, which was then engaged in war with England.

The three boys wore the national blue cockade, and were at once surrounded.

"Take off that blue cockade and put on the tricolor," cried the people.

"Why should I? I am an American, not a Frenchman," was Decatur's reply.

"So are we, but we want to help France against England."

"So do I, but I am an American."

"Take off that cockade to-day, at least."

"I will not. You can wear what you like, but so can I."

One of the most enthusiastic Jacobins made a grab at the cockade to tear it away. Stephen, undismayed

at the superior strength of his assailant, struck down his hand. The young man returned the blow, and Stephen staggered and would have fallen had not Hamilton and Stewart caught him.

Stewart shouted:

"Hurrah for the blue cockade!"

"Hurrah for the tricolor of France!" was the response.

"Long live the United States!"

"Long live the French republic!"

The fight was not serious, while the combatants were shouting for their respective sides, but soon the voices were silent and twenty men were engaged in a contest against three young boys. The strife was an unequal one, but the American boys would not give in.

Charles Stewart had one eye closed and a swollen cheek, Stephen Decatur could scarcely see for the blood which ran down his face, while Hamilton had received such a blow on his right arm as to render it useless. But even despite these mishaps and severe punishment the boys had kept their cockades, though they were now almost powerless to defend them.

At the very moment when defeat seemed assured, a body of young men dressed in seafaring clothes arrived on the scene, and recognizing young Decatur, took a hand in the fight and turned the tide of victory the other way.

They were apprentices, bound to the elder Decatur, and under his instruction learning the art of navigation. The sailor-like apprentices beat back the French sympathizers and carried off the young champion in triumph, still wearing the blue cockade.

"What have you been doing?" asked Mrs. Decatur, as she saw her eldest son brought home in such a fashion.

"Teaching some Frenchmen a lesson," was the reply.

"But, my boy, we are at peace with France."

"I know that, mother; but no man, friend or foe, shall ever make me give up my national colors."

"That is right, my boy," exclaimed his father, coming in at that moment. "Always remember that we owe allegiance to the land of our birth, and that no matter what may be the consequence, the banner of the United States must never be trailed in the dust."

"You encourage him in all his wild courses, husband," said Mrs. Decatur, almost reproachfully.

"No, no, dame! Not wild courses, but patriotic impulses. When I offered my services to George Washington I proved myself an American, and I want my boy to love the flag of his land. It is sacred, dame, and like the altar, should never be insulted."

"I am afraid, father," said she, "that you will make him a sailor like yourself."

"A sailor! Heaven forbid!—a patriot, I hope he may be, ever ready to fight for his country and his flag."

There was a general celebration that evening in the comfortable home of the Decaturs. All the apprentices were invited, and so were "Mopsy" Hamilton, Somers, Charles Stewart, Richard Rush and Francis Gurney Smith, the particular friends of young Decatur.

The elder Decatur was full of enthusiasm, and, possessing a good voice, sang an old Revolutionary sea song, which he had learned from Paul Jones, and which ran something like this:

"Yankee sailors when at sea,
Haul away! Yo ho, boys!
Pipe all hands with merry glee
While aloft they go, boys!
And when with pretty girls on shore,
Their cash is gone, and not before,
They wisely go to sea for more.
Haul away! Yo ho, boys!

“Yankee sailors have a knack,
Haul away! Yo ho, boys!
Of hauling down a British Jack,
Haul away! Yo ho, boys!
Come three to one, right sure am I,
If we can't beat them, still we'll try
To make Columbia's colors fly.
Haul away! Yo ho, boys!

“Yankee sailors love their soil,
Haul away! Yo ho, boys!
And for glory ne'er spare toil,
But flog its foes, you know, boys!
Then while its standard owns a rag
The world combined shall never brag
They made us strike the Yankee flag.
Haul away! Yo ho, boys!”

The apprentices took up the refrain, and the quiet people of Front Street wondered what had caused so much enthusiasm, and well they might, for two squares away the loud refrain could be heard of:

“Haul away! Yo ho, boys!”

Stephen crossed the room to his father's chair and put his arms round the sailor's neck.

“Father, I want to be a sailor, and I want to make the Yankee flag respected on the sea.”

Turning to his comrades, he became quite eloquent:

“Can there be anything more glorious,” he asked, “than to see the blue heavens above the ship and the green waters of the great Atlantic beneath, and to look at the foremast and see the Stars and Stripes floating proudly in the breeze?”

“Well done, Stephen, you are quite an orator. You put me in mind of Patrick Henry, the greatest orator we ever had. I hope you may be as true an American.”

“Father, do you remember that day when we were in the storm?”

"Yes, my boy."

"I shall never forget that time."

"What was it he refers to?" asked one of the elder Decatur's friends.

"Why, you know, Martin, that young Stephen was delicate and got the measles; we all get them, but he got whooping cough as well, and the doctors said that there was nothing like a sea voyage to strengthen the system and cure the cough, so I persuaded the dame to let me take the child with me.

"I was skipper of the *Ariel*, I had bought a third interest in her, and a better ship never plowed the waves. One day the sky became dark——"

"Black as ink," interjected young Stephen.

"The clouds gathered, and I knew we were in for a storm.

"I sent the child below, and made all ready for a severe storm. I felt we were going to have a rough time of it, so I kissed the boy and went on deck. The wind blew great guns. The waters dashed against the *Ariel's* sides until it was a miracle that they were not stove in. Then came a wave right across our deck and a sailor was washed overboard, poor fellow! I never saw him again.

"Not a man but was lashed to his post. The sky was so dark that not one ray of light penetrated its murky blackness. The *Ariel* tossed up and down like a cork. Her timbers creaked, her sides groaned, her rigging rattled until it seemed as though all the ghosts had come from Davy Jones' locker and were screaming and howling in the shrouds.

"When the storm was at the worst, when we dipped under water every minute, with the spiondrift smothering us and as many men as we could muster were at the pumps, Stephen crawled up the companion way and sat on the top step. I shall never forget the fright he gave me when I heard his feeble voice cry out:

"'Father, I can see the flag!' And sure enough,

there was a ray of God's own sunshine breaking through the clouds and resting right on the Stars and Stripes. Well, that showed that we were not going down that time. Stephen sat there, his eyes fixed on the flag, and his little mind hard at work thinking, for what do you think he said? You don't know; of course, you don't. Well, he said, 'Father, God loves that flag, and He sent the sunshine to fall on it so that we might know.'"

The pathetic story caused all to remain silent for a time, and the party broke up soon after.

CHAPTER III.

HOW SOMERS WAS SAVED.

That party marked the first turning point in the life of our hero.

A discussion took place between his parents as to his future career. His father did not want him to go to sea, unless there should be war, when in that case his patriotic impulses would overcome his prudence and he would glory in young Stephen fighting on the water for the supremacy of the flag.

A mercantile career was the one which the father hoped would be his son's choice, and there was every prospect for advancement for him in that career.

The firm of Gurney & Smith, shipbuilders and ship owners, included as one of its members the elder Decatur, who was a part owner of two of the ships built and manned by the firm. In the office of that firm young Stephen could watch his father's interests and at the same time carve out for himself a future.

But the mother, gentle, pious woman, had built fairy castles in the air, and in her dreams saw her loved son, Stephen, a clergyman habited in his surplice and charming the congregations over which he would preside by his eloquence and pious zeal.

After an animated discussion, in which both parents were equally interested and each anxious for the son's welfare, a compromise was effected, and young Stephen was to wait a while before he decided on his life's profession, and as a means to that end he was to enter the Pennsylvania University and there study, so that whatever might be his career he would be well armed through having a good education.

"Capt. Dick" entered the university at the same time

as several of his friends who had been his fellow students at Abercrombie's Academy.

He became a great favorite with all, and was soon the leader of the juniors in all sports and athletic games. In the winter he excelled everyone in hurly and in prisoner's base, which the students played on the smooth, ice-covered surface of the Delaware, and loud were the praises sung in honor of "Capt. Dick."

One beautiful afternoon a game of prisoner's base was in progress on the river, when a loud cry from the spectators on the bank called attention to the fact that one of the players had broken through the ice and had disappeared under its surface.

There was at once a cessation of the game and consternation, for it did not seem possible that the boy could be saved. Some of the most daring laid down on the ice and looked into the water, but no sign of the missing boy could be found.

"Somers!" shouted Decatur, "where are you? Do you hear me?"

There was a response, but so feeble that it was evidently from one in the last stage of consciousness.

Capt. Dick threw off his coat and vest.

"What are you going to do?"

"To save Dick Somers," was the determined reply.

"You cannot. Do not attempt it. You will be drowned as well."

Decatur looked at the speaker, and with a voice which was full of heroic grandeur answered:

"Better be drowned trying to save my friend than live without trying."

Before anyone could stop him, and everyone would, for the risk was almost foolhardy, Decatur had jumped into the icy water and dived under the ice in the direction in which he believed the voice had come from. Some of the spectators began breaking the ice in different places, both for the purpose of air and also to

give Decatur a better chance of saving himself, for none thought he could find Somers.

Capt. Dick knew more about currents than many a sailor, and he had reasoned that as soon as the boy had dropped into the water he would become numb from the shock, and would be carried along by the current. When the effect of the shock had passed, the desire for life would make him try to strike out and reach the place through which he had fallen.

When he plunged into the water he allowed the undercurrent to bear him along for some distance, so that he might reserve his strength for the return. He could see the people on the ice, as though they were walking on glass, and he heard them breaking the ice.

"How silly of them!" he thought, "for the more ice they break the harder it will be to swim through the water."

He could stay longer under water than anyone of his friends, and he had need of that accomplishment, for there was but little chance of breathing until he came to the little island round which he had so often swam, and there he knew he could easily break through the ice.

Fortunately a man who knew the currents had broken a hole in the ice right in front of Decatur, and the young hero bobbed up to get a fresh inflation of his lungs. He was almost dizzy with the exertion, but under he went again, and in less than a minute he had grasped Somers by the hair and was swimming with him to the opening through which he had already taken air.

The people had worked with vim in breaking the ice, but as Decatur reached the surface he found swimming harder than he had thought possible. So much ice had been broken and the current was so strong that the detached blocks of ice scurried along and endangered the swimmer's life. But he held firmly to Somers, and with his other hand struck out for the bank.

The people shouted words of encouragement and cheered him as he gained on the current.

"There isn't a braver man in all the land," said an old Revolutionary veteran, as he clapped his hands with enthusiasm.

"I wish I had him on a good frigate and an enemy in sight, he would make a name for himself," added a naval officer.

"I hear we are to have a navy."

"So we ought to have, and if we do, I tell you that young Decatur's father ought to have the first ship and that boy should be an officer."

"You think a great deal of young Decatur," the first speaker remarked.

"And so do I," spoke up a good member of the Society of Friends. "I am a man of peace, but if we must have war, then I say that thou must pick the best men, men who will place the enemy where they will do the least damage."

"Just as you did the highwayman."

"How was that?"

"Tell him, Septimus."

"It availeth thee nothing to hear it, yet verily I may tell thee. A bold, bad man, having no respect for property and none for life, did say to me, 'Throw up thy hands or I will take thy life,' and I was surprised, so I said to him, 'Friend, I see not how it will be of use to thee if my hands are up or down, but as my life is of more value to me than it could be to thee, I will put them up.' So I raised my hands, and this bold, bad man came up to me and began to feel my inner pockets, in which was some filthy lucre, which I had ready to pay mine landlord. I am ticklish, and so I said, 'Friend, take care, for if thou touchest my ribs I shall forget myself,' and he took no notice, so I lowered my hands and did give him such an ungodly push that he fell at my feet."

"Good for you, Quaker. What next did he do?"

"The bold, bad man drew from his pocket a carnal weapon, which he would call a pistol. I liked not the look of it, because I had one in my own pocket, and I knew how deadly a weapon it could be when used by a bad man, so I took my own pistol, and did say to him, 'Friend, put up thy carnal weapon, or I mayhap use mine,' but he laughed and did use profane words, and then I saw him put powder in the pan and I did likewise, and then, as he was ready to fire, I defended myself by firing first, and the man did die."

"Bravo, Septimus. You are a man of peace, that is a fact. But see, Decatur is on the land and hath saved Somers."

"If we have a navy," continued the Quaker, "methinks I would give a goodly sum from my store of filthy lucre to see that same Decatur an officer."

The saving of Somers was a glorious deed, and the praises of young Stephen Decatur were sung throughout the city. His mother was proud of him, though she wept often as she thought of the danger he encountered in his heroic acts.

His father was so excited that he could scarcely refrain from telling everyone he met that Stephen was his son. The fellow students of Decatur gave a grand banquet in his honor and drank many times to the health of "Capt. Dick," as he was still called by his intimates.

As the days passed by his mother saw, with increasing anxiety, that her loved son would never wear the surplice of a clergyman, and she tried to nerve herself to bear the disappointment with Christian fortitude. Stephen was a dutiful son and did all he could to make his mother happy, but try as he would he could not reconcile himself to adopt the profession his mother most desired for him.

And here in passing, let the author say, that deep student of historical biography as he has been for a long period of years, he has never once found a dis-

obedient or unfilial son become a great man. In every case the love of father and mother, of home and kindred was a distinguishing trait of early life.

Stephen Decatur, strong minded, strong impulsed as he undoubtedly was, had the deepest love and reverence for his mother and father.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BUILDING OF THE NAVY.

Stephen Decatur passed his examinations at the university with honor, but he was glad of the release from the study, in which he felt no heart. Vacation time with him did not mean cessation of study, but rather the turning of his energies to other studies.

Every moment he could spare he devoted to the study of mathematics and the drawing, making and rigging of miniature ships. His mother watched him and sighed as she saw the way his mind was bent. Septimus Golden was a frequent visitor of the Decatur's, and he talked with Mrs. Decatur often about young Stephen.

"Let the boy go his own way, he hath wisdom to judge rightly," the Quaker would say, and at last he was commissioned to talk with the boy.

"Friend Stephen, thou hast not much heart in thy work unless it pertaineth to ships, now is it not so?"

"You are right, Septimus."

"Which would please thee most, to go back to the college or into the office of thy father's friends, Gurney & Smith?"

"Why ask, Septimus? Thou knowest that I would like to be among ships and——"

"Thou shalt have thy desire. On second day thou canst go into the office of those friends."

"Do you mean it?"

"Friend Stephen, I am a man of my word. Thou knowest that my nay means nay and my yea is yea all the time. Then thou must try and make thy name great in the path thou hast chosen."

It was, as Septimus had said, all arranged, and the

mother had given up her ambition and consented to Stephen being placed in the office of her husband's partners, the shippers and shipbuilders, Gurney & Smith. Decatur was a changed youth. He laughed more heartily than he had ever done before, he sang more earnestly, and many a time he surprised his mother by throwing his arms round her neck and kissing her.

A navy was about to be created. A navy was as necessary as the government itself. The Algerian pirates had preyed upon our merchantmen to such an extent that Congress had bought the good will of the Algerians by giving them a million dollars and a fast sailing frigate, and by stipulating to pay an annual tribute. But the Algerians continued their depredations on our ships, and by the year 1797 nearly three hundred and fifty of our merchant vessels were known to have been captured and condemned.

President Adams urged Congress to provide a naval force for the protection of our commerce, and a sum of money was appropriated for the completion and equipment of three frigates, and for augmenting the number of revenue cruisers, and subsequently to build or purchase and equip twelve vessels to carry not more than twenty-two guns.

That was the real commencement of our navy, a navy of which we are proud to-day, for though the number of our ships does not compare favorably with the navies of some European countries, we glory in our White Squadron, which we fondly believe to consist of as perfect war vessels as can be found in the waters of the world.

"Decatur, we have a work for you, a responsible work, which we think you are well able to accomplish."

It was the senior partner of the firm who addressed the young clerk.

"I will do the best I can, sir."

"I know it, Decatur, and I know your heart will be in the work. You know we are the agents of the Naval Department in Philadelphia?"

"Yes, sir."

"And that we are interested in the building of the first frigate, to be really a war vessel, we have ever owned."

"To be the *United States*," added Decatur, proudly.

"That is the truth, and we want a vessel worthy of the name. Now we have selected you to go into Jersey and superintend the getting out of the keel pieces for the *United States*."

"It is a work which will be a labor of love."

"I know it, but it is fraught with danger. You know enough of ship construction to see the necessity of getting the wood free from knots and blemish. Now, we have many Tories still with us, men who would do a great deal to prevent us ever protecting our flag on the seas. These men, I have been given to understand, are planning to palm off defective timbers on us, and so endanger the vessel."

"I heard as much."

"It will be your duty to watch, and if need be use force to prevent their success. Each man under you will be armed and you will have full power to order them to fire if necessity arises. Be cool, do not act unless you have facts, and then only after other means have been tried."

"When do I start?"

"When can you do so?"

"In an hour, sir; I only want enough time to say good-by to mother."

"You need not start until to-morrow morning."

When Decatur returned home he looked as though he was inspired. His face was lighted up with joy, and he clasped his mother to his heart and bade her congratulate him.

"Why, what have you done, my boy?"

"Nothing yet, mother, but I must tell you. You have heard we are building a real war vessel——"

"Yes, and sorry am I that a nation founded on principles of peace with all the world should have to do so."

"Yes, mother, we are at peace with all the world, but the world is not at peace with us; so we must protect ourselves. But that ship, mother, will be my glory, for I am to select the keel pieces, and whenever you hear of the wooden walls of *Columbia*, and of the prowess of the frigate *United States*, you can say, 'My boy selected the timbers.' Is it not glorious?"

"It is a dangerous work, is it not?"

"I do not think so, mother."

"But I have heard that there are many Tories who will prevent the making of a navy."

"That is only talk, mother. Believe me, I do not dream of danger."

"My boy, you are your father's son, and if you grow up to be as good a man as he is I shall be doubly proud, proud of having the best husband in the world and the truest, noblest son. Go, do your duty, and may Heaven bless you!"

Stephen started next day for the scene of his work, full of pride and enthusiasm.

As every reader knows, the keel is the most important part of a ship's frame. It consists of heavy timbers clinched together lengthwise. From it spring, on either side, the ribs on which the ship's sides are laid, and from it, at the bow and stern respectively, the stem and stern posts.

It will thus be seen that the whole weight of the ship and its contents exercise a lateral pressure on each side of the keel.

As hinted, and often spoken of, there were men calling themselves citizens who yet hoped for a reconquest of the States by England, and for this they worked, by fair means and foul.

They tried to embroil the young nation in a war with France or England, thinking that such a war would lead to the overthrow of the republic and the re-establishment of English dominion.

Twice these men had frustrated the desire of Washington to build a navy, and even when a navy was voted the influence of the Tories was so great that the appropriation was only carried by two votes.

"Capt. Dick" was so thorough a patriot that he did not believe such men could be in earnest. He fancied they were only loud talkers, or to use a modern slang expression, blatherskites.

Gurney & Smith were quite prepared to find them working in the forest and in the shipyard. To make the keel defective they would strive their utmost, for a bad keel in a war ship would mean the early destruction of the ship.

CHAPTER V.

TORY PLOTS.

For several days Decatur did not find anything to arouse his suspicions, and he began to think the fears of the firm were groundless.

But when he had some of the timbers selected and all ready for clinching together, he saw some men loafing round the yard at night, and he resolved to watch them. They were cautious. They seemed to know intuitively that they were watched. Decatur, with a trusty assistant, one night made a pile of logs and timber, in the center of which there was a space large enough for them to lie in and be unperceived by anyone passing.

For two nights they did not go near the pile, for fear they, too, had been watched, but on the third night they crawled inside, one at each end, and waited for anything suspicious.

Ebenezer, Decatur's assistant, had been watching very closely a movement on the other side of the pile and close to where some of the selected timber had been placed.

"I swan that ain't right," he muttered to himself, and as he said, kept his eyes peeled, watching the object.

His feet were close to Decatur's feet, and he gave a sudden push, which was the signal agreed upon in case of anything suspicious being seen.

"To the nor'east," whispered Ebenezer, and Stephen put his head out far enough to see in the direction noted.

"Crawl out quietly," whispered Decatur.

Both men got out of the wood pile, and with a run

and a jump landed on the backs of two men who were doing something to some selected timber.

"The devil!" roared one of the men.

"What are you doing here?"

"Yes, what dost thou mean by such work?" asked Ebenezer.

The men had recovered from their fright, and saw that they had to contend with two weaklings, for neither Ebenezer nor Stephen could boast much in personal appearance.

"Mind your own business, you——"

"That is what we are here for; now tell me, who are you? What are you after here?"

Instead of answering, one of the men struck out heavily and at the same time put his foot in Decatur's way.

There was no possibility of remaining standing, but Stephen had learned a trick at college which stood him in good stead now. As he fell he caught the man by the legs and pulled him down at the same time.

On the ground each had a chance, but Capt. Dick was weaker physically than his opponent, besides the man had a chance of serving a long term of imprisonment if he was captured, for his offense would be treason, so he was desperate.

Ebenezer was wrestling with the other man and giving as good as he received, but Decatur had more than met his match in strength.

He had a pistol, but it was before the days of percussion caps, and so it was almost useless, for to find the powder to drop in the pan would give his opponent enough time to gain a permanent advantage.

By a sudden movement he managed to gain his feet and then, picking up a heavy hammer, which had been left by a workman, he raised it and would have dashed out the fellow's brains, had he not appealed for mercy.

"You surrender?"

"Yes."

"And will tell who employed you?"

"I will tell everything I know."

"Throw up your hands."

The man did as he was bidden very humbly.

Unfortunately Ebenezer had looked round to see how the young clerk was getting on, and his antagonist saw the advantage, and with a lurch forward knocked Ebenezer down and with a stick felled Decatur.

Ebenezer seized the hammer which Decatur had dropped, and, swinging it round, threw it at the retreating couple of traitors.

Ebenezer could throw the hammer, and nine times out of ten strike just where he wanted. Although done without taking aim, strange to say, he knocked down both men and with such force that one had a broken leg and the other was so injured that he could not escape if he had tried.

On examination of the keel timbers it was found that the men had been boring into the heart and then filling the holes with a resinous substance which would surely rot the wood.

Gurney & Smith reported the capture to the government, and the secretary of war sent for Decatur to personally thank him for his clever work. The prisoners turned State's evidence, and a plot was revealed which might have led to the overthrow of the new nation.

A second time did the government thank Decatur, and this time the President promised that when the *United States* was launched the young man should have the honor of standing next the President, or, if he preferred, next the future commander of the frigate, and in addition to that should be named the first midshipman in the new navy, if he desired to adopt the navy as his profession.

"Midshipman Decatur," said Francis Gurney, "if you join the *United States* you will have two schoolmates as fellow middies."

"Who are they?"

"Charles Stewart and Richard Somers."

"In better company no lad could sail, and I long for the first trip."

Passing along the street in front of the shipyard that night, Decatur had to step into the street to avoid a number of rough-looking men who were standing close to the wall.

As he reached them they quickly surrounded him and began to hustle and push him about.

"What do you want with me?" he asked, indignantly, yet with a certain caution, for he was powerless against so many.

"Want? Why you are the rebel who gave evidence against the good men and true who believe in King George."

"King George has nothing to do with me. I am an American."

"Are you? Then you belong to the king, for only rebels want to fight against their lawful sovereign."

"We will not discuss that matter; let me go, and you go to your homes."

"When we are ready. You will have to go with us first."

"Where to?"

"That is just what we shall not tell you. Seize him, Bill."

In a minute Decatur was bound and gagged by the miscreants. He was then carried down to a boat and thrown in very unceremoniously. So many deeds of lawlessness were enacted on the river front that one more or less did not trouble the authorities, hence no extra constables were on duty there.

Night watchmen were employed by the different firms, but they did not come on duty until an hour after Decatur was seized and borne away.

The boat was rowed up the river some little distance and Decatur recognized several who would have

come to his assistance had he been able to call out, but as he was securely gagged and in the bottom of the boat, he was unseen.

A landing was made about half a mile from the place where he had been captured. The men carried him into a low cabin, half underground, it being built over an old and unused cellar.

The place had long been suspected as a hiding place for smugglers and river pirates, but no direct evidence had been obtained against it. By the time Decatur was in the cabin the other desperadoes, who had remained on shore, came running up and entered the place.

In the dim light Stephen had been unable to recognize any of his assailants and he trusted that in the cabin he would be able to get a good look at them, and to identify them afterwards.

But when the candles were lighted he found that the men remaining in the place wore sheets over their heads, through which small holes had been cut for their eyes.

"Bring in the other prisoner," ordered one of the white-sheeted men, in a voice which showed that he was more refined than the tools who had abducted Decatur.

From another cellar, which opened out of the one they were in, Decatur saw the two men drag in his assistant, Ebenezer.

"Prisoners, you have been found guilty of giving aid to the unlawful courts, courts founded upon rebellion, which will speedily be overthrown when our sovereign regains his possessions. But guilty though you are, we are merciful. We allow you to say why judgment should not be ordered and punishment awarded. If no good or valid reason can be given, this court, in the name of King George, will order you to be placed on board some English ship of war, there to be made serve the king you have offended, or the court may

order some other punishment. What have you to say?"

"Is this a farce?" asked Decatur, whose gag had been removed.

"It is no farce, as you will find."

"Then I refuse to say anything, for I owe no allegiance to any king, whatever his name may be, and furthermore, you are traitors to your country and enemies of law in what you are doing."

Decatur realized that he had but little chance of escape, for the Tories were working with the press gangs and forcibly taking Americans to British war ships, where they were compelled to serve the English king, though they owed him no allegiance.

"The court orders that you be both taken, by the first boat leaving, to sea, where a good frigate will be glad to receive able-bodied men like you."

"You would never dare!"

"Gag him, for his voice is too loud."

The order was obeyed, though it took three men to force a gag into Decatur's mouth, he struggled so forcibly. Then the man who had given the order prepared to retire, but gave parting instructions relating to the prisoners.

"If there be any attempt to rescue them, kill them both at once. If it should happen that the place is surrounded, then have the tar ready, strip the prisoners, and pour plenty of hot tar over them and empty a bag of feathers over their heads, then let them run where they list, only let the tar be boiling."

Stephen heard the savage order and looked at Ebenezer, who was on the verge of fainting.

It was brutal, but the men were desperate, and Decatur knew too well that deeds of lawlessness were being enacted daily, and the government seemed powerless to save the citizens.

CHAPTER VI.

A STRANGE CATCH.

There seemed to be no chance of escape, for not only were the two prisoners bound and gagged, but the cabin was well guarded.

Ebenezer feared the tar and feathers almost more than the press gang. He had seen a man, during the last days of the war, tarred and feathered, and he knew that when the tar was taken off by the application of hot grease, great pieces of skin came with it.

But Stephen Decatur would rather have faced the horrible torture and indignity than to be compelled to serve on an English ship. That afternoon there had been seen a frigate lying outside, which carried the French colors, but looked more like an English-built ship.

It appeared to be a peaceful merchantman, but often appearances were deceptive, and many a good citizen feared that the press gang might be at work to kidnap some deserving fellow and make him serve the English king, or the French republic, for both nations thought it perfectly justifiable to impress Americans.

Men thus pressed were expected to serve with all the zeal and bravery of enlisted sailors. It had been proven repeatedly that a pressed man who refused to serve was triced up and lashed with the cat o' nine tails until his back was cut to ribbons. If a pressed man deserted and was caught he was hanged summarily at the yardarm. Although England had signed a treaty of peace, and France greeted us as an ally, both nations recruited their navies by means of the press gang, and laughed at all protests made by the United States.

For an hour the prisoners waited to learn their fate. For an hour they suffered all the tortures of mind that men could endure. Then came a release, or at least a change. A man opened the door and beckoned the leader of the guard.

"Are they ready?"

"Yes, I can have them out in a minute."

"Good! Then bring them when you hear the usual whistle."

This much of the conversation was heard by Decatur. He felt that the hour of their doom had come. If he could only speak he would tell Ebenezer to be of good cheer. But the gag was securely fixed and speaking was impossible. He looked at his companion, and by his eyes tried to encourage him. Ebenezer smiled as well as he was able, and proved that he was ready to suffer, if need be, for his flag and his country.

A whistle, soft and low, was heard outside. The men guarding the prisoners rose to their feet and commanded Decatur and Ebenezer to rise.

"This way, don't make a noise, or we'll run you through."

Between two men each of the prisoners marched to the river, where a boat was lying ready to receive them.

Stephen struggled to get free, but the ropes were well tied and it seemed impossible to slip the knots. He was the first to be pushed into the boat, then Ebenezer followed, and the men at the oars struck the water softly, but with strong strokes. Regularly the oars dipped the water, and the boat swung out into the middle of the stream. Past the docks, far past the shipyard, the boat went, until the rowers thought it safe to throw off disguise and sing.

They sang of the flag of old England, a flag that had braved all dangers for a thousand years, and then in mockery, it seemed, they sang that no slave could

exist beneath its folds, a sarcasm which made the prisoners smile, notwithstanding their desperate condition.

The shipping was left behind, and the darkness of the night was broken by the rays of a third-quarter moon, rays which danced upon the water and glistened as they struck the fleecy waters.

The frigate, still supposedly French, was near by, and the hearts of the two Americans sank within them.

Decatur was getting restless, and a strange good fortune happened to him. He saw a vessel coming toward the boat, and that vessel he recognized as the one his father commanded. He tried to attract Ebenezer's attention, but failed. He must try an escape alone. Rising to his feet, he stood a moment looking at the approaching vessel.

One of the rowers saw his gaze and struck at him with his oar. That was just what Decatur expected. Over the side of the boat he fell, gagged, bound hand and foot, unable to call for help or make a stroke for life. Much as the rowers hated to leave him behind, it was necessary for their own safety that they should proceed.

Ebenezer would have followed his master, but he was seized and held forcibly to his seat. Stephen Decatur knew that the tide was coming in, and he knew he could float for an hour if need be, for he had done it once to decide a college bet. When he fell over into the water he sank quickly, but soon came to the surface; then, by lying perfectly still, he could float with the tide.

He had hoped the lookout on his father's vessel would have seen him, but in that he was mistaken. To Stephen Decatur he was the most prominent object on the face of the water, but to Stephen Decatur's father he was one object among many, and no one on the *Ariel* thought he was anything but a log floating in on the tide.

Carried forward with the tide, hurled backward with

the receding wave, yet going farther onward each time, he, the future commodore of the United States Navy, was borne on the waters of the Delaware toward the city.

An old fisherman, who loved to get out at night and make his haul in time for the breakfasts of the good citizens of the Quaker City, saw something floating along on the water.

"Looks plaguey like a mahogany log," he mused; "shouldn't wonder if it was one o' them logs lost t'other night. Blame me if it is, I can make more by gettin' it than by fishin'."

Looking up at the moon, he calculated that he could swerve from his course and spend ten minutes looking after the log, and if it was of no value he would still be in time for his fishing.

He pulled for the log, not with quick, silent strokes, but with short, heavy ones, strokes which lifted the boat out of the water and made it fairly jump over the waves.

"Merciful powers!" he exclaimed. "It's a stiff."

Two conflicting ideas fought for supremacy in his mind at that time.

If it was a corpse he might sell it to the hospital students, or he might take it to the morgue, but whichever he did he stood a chance of being charged with murder.

Simon Long had no desire to take the trouble of towing a body into the city unless he could make something out of it. But he had also a very strong objection to being charged with a crime, especially when he was entirely innocent. He rowed close to the body and found that it was a young man, whom he did not recognize at first.

"Crash me, but I think he's alive!"

He pushed the body with his oar, and Decatur opened his eyes.

"Crash me, but if it isn't 'Capt. Dick,' or I'm not a sinner!"

Simon did not hesitate any longer, but set to work to lift the body into the boat. He moved the gag first thing after Stephen was in the boat.

"Alive! Why, my boy, how came you in such a pickle?"

Stephen tried to speak, but his lips moved only. No sound proceeded from them. Simon let the boat drift while he unfastened the ropes, and then Decatur stretched his legs. The movement seemed to loosen the muscles of his throat, for he was able to thank Simon.

"Take me home, Simon, and never mind fishing to-night."

"Right heartily will I, 'Capt. Dick.' I guess this is the best night's fishing I ever did."

"Not one word to anyone about the gag or the cords," cautioned Stephen.

"Why?"

"Because I say so. But you are a good old fellow, and I will tell you. I was seized by the press men and I managed to get away by falling overboard. Now you will see that nothing should be said about it."

"Right you are, Capt. Dick, and it is my hope that I may sail under you some day and make some of those Britishers give up our men, darn 'em!"

Simon was liberally rewarded for the loss of his night's fishing, and he never opened his mouth except to say that he found Capt. Dick that night when he fell off the dock.

Stephen told his father all about it, and between them they made up a tale which satisfied Mrs. Decatur and allayed her fears.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LAUNCHING OF THE "UNITED STATES."

All the nation was aroused.

Enthusiasm was at fever heat, for we had to do something at once to prevent our commerce being forever destroyed.

The French Directory had sanctioned the searching of American vessels by issuing an order to treat American vessels as they were treated by the British.

The sanction given was taken advantage of by French ships, and our former allies became the enemies of our commerce. Even the universities were aroused, and Harvard called on the people to raise money and build a navy, "sufficiently large to wipe France and England off the seas."

At last came the day for the launching of the *United States*. It was the first vessel built by the United States under the Constitution, and the whole country celebrated its event.

Banquets were held, and the "Wooden Walls of Columbia" toasted everywhere, alike in fashionable houses, at costly banquets, and in the village tap houses.

Joseph Story, of Harvard, had written a patriotic poem for the occasion, and in all parts of the country people sang it with great enthusiasm.

The students at Harvard sang it in the chapel, and no one tried to prevent them.

One verse shows the sentiment:

"Shall Gallia's clan our coast invade,
With hellish outrages scourge the main,
Insult our nation's neutral trade,
And we not dare our rights maintain?
Rise, united Harvard's band,
Rise, the bulwark of our land."

The sun was shining brightly on that May afternoon chosen for the launching of the *United States*.

The streets of Philadelphia were thronged with holiday-making people. The sun had not risen an hour before the spectators began to hurry toward the docks, hoping to get a good place to view the momentous event.

The shipyard was besieged with hundreds of anxious ones, with all sorts of excuses for going inside to see the great vessel as she lay on the stocks.

By ten o'clock not a place could be obtained by the late comer, though the launching was not to be until one. The venders did a good business. They sold everything, sandwiches, glasses of milk, and then when all were satisfied with eatables and milk they turned to and sold medals and other souvenirs of the occasion.

Then ballad singers sang and collected pennies, and grew rich, for the people were generously inclined.

When the song was finished, and the collection made, the sheets of songs were offered for sale, and in an hour thousands were singing:

"Americans, then fly to arms,
And learn the way to use 'em.
If each man fights to 'fend his rights,
The French can't long abuse 'em.

"Yankee Doodle (mind the tune),
Yankee Doodle Dandy;
For the French there's trouble brewin';
We'll spank 'em, hand and handy."

The river was gay with pleasure craft, decked with flags, and bright with the gay dresses of the ladies, who were even more patriotic than the men. The great frigate, too, was a mass of bunting from stem to stern.

At noon, precisely, Capt. John Barry entered the shipyard and looked at the frigate with eyes full of

pride, but even as he gazed the tears filled those expressive eyes, tears not of sorrow but of great joy.

"Isn't she a beauty?" he asked, and the men who were within sound of his voice answered with a very emphatic "yes."

"Here's to the grand ship; may she make as many captures from the enemy as she will have ropes in her rigging," shouted the elder Decatur, who had just been appointed captain of the *Delaware*, a frigate purchased by the government, and then being fitted up as a war ship.

"That is a sentiment everyone can drink to," responded Barry.

"Father, was any ship more perfect?" exclaimed Stephen.

"My boy, the ship is good, and if those who man her are as good, no one will ever be ashamed of the *United States*."

"Hello, Stewart, you are a middy on our ship, too?"

"No, Capt. Dick, I am your superior officer. I am fourth lieutenant."

There was not one bit of jealousy in Stephen's nature, and he grasped his fellow student's hand and congratulated him.

"Somers, are you with us?"

"Yes, I am your senior, if there is any seniority among middies."

"When did you get your commission?"

"It is dated April 30th."

"And so is mine, but I see yours was registered before mine."

"Yes, that is why I said I am your senior. Stewart has been on a voyage with your father, that is why he is a lieutenant."

"He deserves the position."

"Now, gentlemen, please, those who are going on board to take their chances of a ducking, please do so."

A number of the officers went on board and the signal was given.

The clock struck one, and the sound of many hammers was heard knocking off the blocks; and, after a moment's pause, the frigate glided swiftly and gracefully into the water, and after a dip, rode buoyantly on the placid surface of the Delaware.

The President swung the bottle of champagne against the side of the ship, and the war ship, the first of the new navy, was launched and named the *United States*.

The people kept up the merriment all day and far into the night. Bonfires were lighted and the streets put on a gala appearance. Philadelphia was not a slow city then, for she was fired with that divine spirit of patriotism which fills the soul with enthusiasm.

Songs were sung and bands played in the streets. The flag, the one flag loved by all, floated all night from churches and buildings in every part of the city.

There was joy in the house of the Decatur's, and young Stephen was toasted as one who had selected the timber for the keel and had watched the ship grow and then had taken the first dip into the water with her.

There was genuine pleasure in treading the deck of the frigate and learning the duties of seamanship.

Stephen spent his time between his appointment and putting to sea in a practical study of navigation under Talbot Hamilton, who had been an officer of the British navy, and who had a school in Lower Dublin, in the environs of the city.

On the ship he went to work to systematically learn the uses of all the ropes and where they were belayed, and in order to aid his memory and avoid the repetition of questions, he wrote the name of each rope behind the rail with his pencil.

Whatever he learned he was willing to impart to his brother middies, not that he was egotistic or pedantic,

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but he believed that in the greater knowledge by all the success of the coming voyage would rest.

At last the *United States* was ready for her work.

She took a trial trip to test her powers, and at the same time try the accuracy of her guns.

The heavy boom of the guns startled the people of the city, but when they realized that it was from the frigate, which they had seen built, they cheered every time they heard the report.

The enthusiasm of those on board was equal to that of the people who cheered in the streets every time they heard the report of the guns. Young Decatur watched with interest the work of the gunners, and was in danger of forgetting discipline when a gun was fired.

He pushed forward and stood so close to one of the gunners that Lieut. Barron, in a tone of stern command, shouted:

"Back to your quarters, you landlubber."

Decatur looked around, wondering to whom the command referred, when Barron again shouted:

"Midshipman Decatur, back to your quarters, or I'll order you under arrest."

Stephen slunk away, feeling humiliated and insulted. He sought his friend, the commodore, and complained to him.

"My boy, remember this, it is the duty of each one on board a ship to obey. Everything must go as regularly as a clock. You must obey those above you just as readily as you have a right to make those lower in rank obey you, and just as Lieut. Barron has to obey me. It is discipline, my boy, and in this case Barron was right and you were wrong, though your zeal and enthusiasm were excusable."

There was considerable bitterness of spirit in Decatur's heart at the reproof he had received, and which he knew he merited, but it made him a better officer, and therefore was of use to him.

When night came on many who were on a ship for

the first time got in the way and caused many expressions of disgust, some muttered profanity and much amusement.

Lieut. Barron, a stern disciplinarian, was almost savage as he saw the crude material out of which warriors were to be made.

"Darn 'em!" he exclaimed to the commodore. "On land they'd run, but on a ship they'll have to face the music. A liberal dose of rope end will have to be used to lick 'em into shape."

It was in the days when the rope end was resorted to for every offense, however small; in fact, the administration of bodily punishment was looked forward to as a means of amusement for the other members of the crew.

Midshipman Somers was standing near the main bitts, when a boat had been lowered for practice. The order was given:

"Set taut!"

The boat had been hooked on the davits, and the men came hurrying forward with the tackle.

"Away with her!" came the order, and the men hauled away as they were ordered, knocking Somers down, but never noticing until after several of the seamen had fallen over him, and then they continued to haul until the order came to belay.

Then Somers crawled to his feet, bruised and sore, amid the laughter of his comrades.

After many mishaps of this kind the cruise ended, and the commodore reported that the ship was ready for active service.

It was a glorious day when the *United States* started out on her first real voyage.

CHAPTER VIII.

MUTINY.

It was past the middle of July that the *United States*, having in company the *Delaware*, commanded by the elder Decatur, started eastward, having orders to join the *Herald* off Cape Cod, and then to cruise among the Windward West India Islands.

For some days the water was as calm as the river, and the frigate glided over its surface a thing of beauty, but looking almost lazy in its action. Not a vessel had been sighted, and the crew began to feel almost tired of the monotony, when the cry was heard coming from the lips of Third Lieut. Barron:

"Sail ho!"

"Whereaway, sir?" asked the post captain.

Barron pointed to a white speck, which was so far away that only the sharpest eye could discern it.

"What is she?" asked the captain.

"She looks like a Britisher."

Then there was a laugh at Barron's expense.

The second lieutenant, who hated Barron, sneered at the wonderful gift possessed by him, telling the nationality of a ship which was so far away that only through a powerful glass could the captain tell whether it was a sail or an island.

Barron took no notice, not that he did not feel bad, but being a disciplinarian, he would not allow himself to criticise anything his superior in rank said or did.

But as the frigate approached the stranger, the laugh became louder against Barron, because the French colors were hoisted on the frigate which he had declared British.

Commodore Barry was rejoiced, and ordered the French colors to be run up on the *United States*.

"I don't like that," said Decatur.

"Why?" asked Stewart.

"I would like our own flag to float above us."

"So it will, in due season; I can see that the commodore means to draw the Frenchman within range of our guns and then we will taste powder."

"I hope so."

Commodore Barry signaled to Decatur on the *Delaware* to haul off so that he could tackle the stranger single-handed.

"Clear for action!"

Instantly the men were at work, each doing his allotted share, and all working with the exactness of a well-regulated machine.

"Beat to quarters, for we have a fight before us."

A general cheer followed the speech, as the men took their places, the gunners to their places, the officers to their batteries, and the sailors who were to work the ship to their stations.

The post captain climbed on the hatch over the companion ladder of the quarter-deck, holding his speaking trumpet, ready to direct the fight.

But the stranger, seeing the determination of the *United States* to bear down upon her and fight, hauled down the French flag and ran up the British colors, and the *United States* hoisted her proper flag, so a collision was avoided at that time.

The Britisher was the *Thetis* of fifty guns. There was considerable disappointment among the crew when it was known there was to be no fight. Discussion among the middies was also rife, and the majority thought the *United States* ought to have tackled the *Thetis*, even though she did happen to be a Britisher.

The *Herald* was not seen off Cape Cod, so Commodore Barry proceeded to Boston Bay, and anchored in Nantasket Roads. After waiting some days and finding that the *Herald* was not ready to put to sea,

Commodore Barry started on a cruise to the Windward West India Isles, in company with the *Delaware*.

No adventure was met with, and the small fleet returned to the *Delaware*, where the *United States* was recaulked and the rigging refitted.

It was November before she again put to sea. The crew contained men who were always grumbling, and some even threatened to mutiny. Decatur was on duty one evening late when he overheard a conversation, which exposed a plot to obtain grog in an unlimited quantity. There was no doubt about it, and the men who were engaged in the plot were daring fellows, who would not hesitate at murder to conserve their purpose.

The young midshipman was in doubt what to do. If he reported the conversation he had no means of proving the truth of his word, and if a watch was set on the grog and any of the crew were caught, he knew they would be strung up at the yardarm, for such an act of mutiny was punishable by death, when on a cruise.

At sea a war ship is always under war rules, and any act of mutiny is considered as grave as though the ship was endangered by it. He had almost made up his mind to take no notice of the conversation, but to give the men concerned some work on deck at the hour fixed, when he heard another agree to take part.

Decatur would be off duty at that hour, and so he resolved on a bold but hazardous course of procedure. All through the remaining hours of his watch he appeared unconscious of having heard anything suspicious, but no sooner was he relieved than he proceeded to carry out his counter plan.

He had not heard the last instructions, but by the gestures of the ringleader he fancied it would be between two and three bells in the middle watch.

Quietly, during the first watch, Decatur got together a couple of muskets and two heavy pistols, a

crowbar and hammer. These he placed just inside the room where the grog was stored.

He had to hide behind a barrel in the room when the last ration of grog was given out, and he was almost suffocated. As he suspected, the man who gave out the grog was in the plot, and left the door unlocked.

The first watch passed very slowly, for time does lag when one is confined in a narrow space without anything to occupy the attention. He heard eight bells with the greatest pleasure he had ever experienced in his life.

The hour of midnight meant that the first watch was over, and the middle starboard watch to commence. Everything remained quiet, and Decatur became very sleepy. It was a wonder that he did not fall asleep in his cramped, uncomfortable position.

He nodded often, and his eyes seemed as though they had peas in them, but when one bell sounded he rose and inspected his weapons. He put powder in the pans of his pistols and muskets and laid them carefully on top of a barrel.

By the time he had this done, two bells sounded, and he became all alert. A few minutes later he heard stealthy steps coming down the ladder. "One—two—three, that is all—three men in all. I can manage them easily," he said to himself.

He could hear them breathing on the other side of the door. He knew that they were to open the door, abstract a small barrel of rum, and carry it to the coal bunks, where their confederates would join them.

There they would be undisturbed and they could drink their fill.

Cautiously the door was opened, and one of the men entered and whispered that it was all right.

Then the others entered, evidently with bare feet, and as they passed the middle of the room where some small kegs of rum were stacked, Stephen slipped from

his hiding place and closed the door, putting his back against it and holding a pistol in each hand.

To his surprise the men sat down and took a good drink from a cask which had already been tapped. The craving for rum was so strong that they could not wait to get the keg they intended stealing into the bunks, so they took a deep draught there.

Then they rose, and at the same time three bells sounded. That seemed to rouse them, for they would be expected in the coal bunks at that time, and they could not trust their confederates.

It is a strange thing that when men conspire to do wrong they are full of mistrust of each other. No matter how strong the oath which binds them to secrecy and fidelity may be, not one will trust his neighbor.

It was only a few steps to the door, and the men reached it, but only to find some one—it was too dark to recognize features—was there, and presenting a couple of pistols at them.

"Put that grog down."

"We shan't do anything o' the sort."

"Put it down, or I'll fire."

There was an ominous click as Decatur raised the hammer containing the flint, which was to strike the steel and drop a spark on the powder.

"Who are you?" asked one of the men in a whisper, fearful that his voice might betray him.

"I am Midshipman Decatur."

There was a suppressed laugh at that, for they had feared it was one of the superior officers.

"You had better join us and have a glorious time," suggested the ringleader.

"Put that keg down or I'll have a glorious time shooting, and then some of you will be feeding the fishes in a few minutes."

One of the men stooped down and crawled along the floor. It was unperceived by Decatur, and he knew

nothing of the act until he felt the man grasp his legs and try to pull him down.

Two reports rang out, and instantly there was a rush from the deck.

The door was pushed open and Decatur was found lying on the top of two men, while over him stood a third with the crowbar raised ready to brain the brave young midddy.

"What means this?" asked Fourth Lieut. Stewart, as he presented his pistol at the head of the seaman who had the crowbar, making him drop it instantly.

Decatur had fallen with such force that his head came against the barrel and stunned him. Unger, the man with the crowbar, thought he might turn the affair in his favor, and looking at Stewart, pulled his forelock and stammered out a statement to the effect that he was roused from sleep by hearing a strange noise, and had gone to the storeroom, when he found Decatur and the two men in the act of carrying off a keg of rum. He seized the crowbar to defend himself and the grog, when Decatur fired, and as he was unsteady in his aim, shot his confederates instead of the brave man who had pitted himself against three mutineers.

Not one word of the story did Lieut. Stewart believe, and so he ordered Unger under arrest and bade the sailors carry Decatur to his hammock. One of the mutineers was dead and the other wounded slightly.

Stewart reported everything to his superior, who in turn carried the news to the post captain and then from him to the commodore.

All hands were piped on deck. Every man had to turn out, and a sleepy crowd they looked.

The commodore had on his long nightcap, and had wrapped a blanket about his body, for he had not stopped to dress.

The post captain had carefully, though hurriedly, put on his uniform, and some of the others appeared

with half their bodies covered. Barron had put on his coat only, leaving his legs bare, while Jones had on his trousers, while his upper part was clothed in a shawl which he had often worn round his neck on cold nights.

The roll was called, and then the commodore asked for particulars.

Unger was called upon by Stewart to state what he knew, and while he spoke, a voice from the rear broke in upon his accusation with the very emphatic assertion:

"It's a lie!"

Everyone knew the voice was that of Midshipman Decatur, and he was asked to give his version. Weak from his fall, he was allowed to remain seated, and was about to tell his story, when the captain announced that a free pardon would be given to all, save the ring-leaders, if the truth was told.

Then Decatur told of all he had heard, and his story carried the impress of truth, but it needed corroboration, seeing that he was accused of being a mutineer.

"It is all true," said Seaman Peters, of the port watch. "It is all true as he says. I was one of the men, and I am sorry for it enough; in fact, I was tarnation sorry as soon as I agreed, but I never go back on my word, and I waited in the coal bunks for the grog they were to bring."

"Who was the one who asked you to join?"

"Zach Unger."

"It's a lie," shouted that mutineer.

"No, it ain't a lie," piped the weak voice of the wounded man, "I was in it an' I'm not goin' to ask for mercy. I'm ready to take a neck stretch from the yard, so I am, but I ain't goin' to sneak out o' it by tellin' a lie."

One more confessed, and the action of Decatur was highly praised. Unger was ordered to be hanged in

twenty-four hours; it was to have been in an hour, only Decatur interceded for him, and gained the extension of time.

The others were pardoned and restored to their positions.

Decatur was highly praised for quelling the mutiny, though an official reprimand had to be given him for acting without orders, and failing to report what he had heard.

"This discipline on a man-of-war is a mighty queer thing," he whispered to Somers. "I am officially reprimanded and unofficially praised; which is the most important?"

"I wouldn't mind the scolding, so long as I got the praise," very philosophically answered the young middy.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CAPTURE OF THE PRIVATEER.

Seven bells had been rung in the morning watch when the *United States* encountered a heavy wind. She had entered the Gulf Stream, and the air was hot and sultry in comparison to the cold weather experienced previously.

The wind increased in fury until it amounted almost to a hurricane. The ship rolled, and lurched, and pitched like a creature suddenly bereft of sense and reason. The wind rattled through the rigging, and the bellowing of the storm was horrible.

As the ship rounded to, an ugly green sea struck her full abeam, and fell with a roar of a volcanic discharge on her decks, burying everyone in the foam of the sea. The good ship stood the storm well for three days, and then the commodore began to feel uneasy. The gale had shown no diminution of fury, and one sailor had been washed overboard.

The heated air had caused the rigging to slacken so much, that it became valueless for the support of the masts, the loss of which seemed certain, and even that of the ship and crew was seriously apprehended.

"What can be done?" the commodore asked his officers.

"Nothing, but make our peace with Heaven," answered the first lieutenant, as the report reached them that the ship had sprung her bowsprit.

"Never give up, is my motto," spoke up Third Lieut. Barron.

There was a perceptible sneer as he spoke, visible on the faces of some of the officers.

"What do you suggest, sir?" asked the commodore.

"I think the rigging can be made taut, commodore, and thus save the masts."

"Impossible!" said the post captain.

"There seems no other hope, and I am willing that it should be tried; will you undertake it, Barron?"

"I will, commodore."

"We shall all be drowned."

"If he fails we shall, if he does not attempt it we shall, so there is one chance in our favor, and we are going to try it."

Barron set to work at once. He got the purchases on the shrouds, and succeeded in getting the rigging taut, and the lanyards secured without accident. The masts were thus saved, and most likely the ship also, through the action of Lieut. Barron.

Of course the officers began to belittle the act, saying that the state of the rigging was not as bad as reported, and that anyone could have done what Barron did, which was all very true, perhaps, but no one thought of doing it, save the young lieutenant.

"I shall not forget you, Barron," said Commodore Barry, when the ship began to right herself and the storm abated.

It was necessary to put into port for a new bowsprit, and so the *United States* was headed for the Chesapeake, and at Newport put into good condition.

The commodore did not forget Barron, for before the ship was ready to sail a general move had been made, the post captain had been transferred, and Barron promoted to the position. Decatur got leave of absence to take a flying trip to his home, and to receive the blessings of his mother, who had now become reconciled to his choice of a profession.

In company with the *Delaware*, still commanded by the elder Decatur, the *United States* cruised among the West India Islands, and captured two French privateers, the *Sanspareil*, of sixteen, and the *Jaloux*, of fourteen guns.

Then the two ships separated for a time, and the *United States* captured the *Tartuffe*, of eight guns, and *L'Amour de la Patrie*, of six guns.

For his bravery in this engagement, and through the wounding of one of the lieutenants, Stephen obtained his first promotion and became a sub-lieutenant.

It was just off Martinique that the lookout announced a sail in sight, and through the glass, Decatur spied a French privateer, which he duly reported to Post Capt. Barron.

The privateer must have seen the formidable American frigate about the same time, for she crowded on all sail, until her long, narrow hull swept through the waves like a fish.

"Crowd on all sail and overhaul that privateer!" ordered the commodore.

The breeze was fresh, and the chase became exciting.

The privateer was swift and thought it would be able to elude the *United States*, but gradually the immense spread of the frigate's canvas began to tell, and she rapidly overhauled the Frenchman.

The captain of the privateer was a plucky, brave man and he became desperate in his efforts to escape, for, seeing that he was about to be overhauled, he played the game of fox and hounds, turning short to windward and running right under the guns of the frigate.

The move was a bold one, and might have been successful, had not Decatur took his place at a gun and sighted it himself. There was considerable feeling against the young lieutenant interfering with the gunners' duties, but when the smoke cleared away, it was seen that he had sent a twenty-four pound shot straight through the hull of the privateer.

All was confusion on the French vessel. The water poured into her hold through the hole cut by the shot.

Her sails were hastily lowered, and loud and frantic cries for help came from the crew.

There was no other shot necessary, for the one so cleverly aimed by young Decatur did the work. Boats were lowered and Decatur was in command of one.

The scene on the privateer was almost ludicrous. The crew perched like birds on the rail of the sinking vessel from stem to stern.

Many had ripped off their clothing, in order to be prepared to swim.

"*Dieu moi assiste!*" shouted the captain.

"*Secours!*" cried others, while some shouted in English for help, and others cursed, in broken English, the shot which had ruined so fine a vessel.

Decatur caught the captain of the sinking vessel and dragged him into his boat. The Frenchman brushed the salt water from his eyes, and in broken English expressed his surprise that he should have been fired upon by a vessel carrying the United States flag.

"Ees eet that ees a sheep of les Etat-Unis?" he inquired.

"It is!" replied Decatur.

"I am indeed sairprised. I had not thought that les Etat-Unis had the war weeth La Republique Francaise."

"No, sir," responded Decatur; "but you knew that the French Republic was at war with the United States, that you were taking our merchant vessels every day, and crowding my countrymen into prison at Basseterre to die like sheep."

"Eet ees verite," responded the captain with bowed head, feeling just a little ashamed of his conduct while his ship was afloat.

The crew of the privateer, sixty in all, were landed on board the *United States* just as the privateer sank beneath the waters, ending its career ingloriously.

The captain stood on the deck, watching its topmast

sink beneath the waves, when, either by accident or design he fell forward, and a splash proved that he was in the water.

"Man overboard!"

"Second cutters away! Third cutters away!" was shouted wildly from deck to deck.

Decatur sprang forward and into the mizzen chains. In an instant he was in the water, and swimming in the direction of the sinking Frenchman. He caught him as he was sinking the third time, and held him afloat until the boat arrived. It was a daring act and won for the chivalrous Decatur a great meed of applause.

That very night, the French sailors taken from the privateer conceived the possibility of capturing the *United States* and turning her into a French privateer. Decatur discovered their plot by the merest accident. He had occasion to go to the armory and saw the men gathered there. Instinctively he felt that something was wrong.

To go up on deck would be to leave the guns in the hands of the enemy, and that would be fatal. To call for assistance might endanger his own life. He entered the armory and armed himself with a couple of pistols. When he emerged, he stood with his back against the door, and in a loud voice shouted:

"Up on deck, every man, or I'll shoot!"

They showed no inclination to move, and Decatur dreaded an attack, for he would be powerless against so many. "On deck, I say, on deck before I count three."

No one moved, but all stared as though they thought him insane.

"One! Two! Three!"

As he counted the third numeral he fired, and his face was enveloped in smoke.

CHAPTER X.

IN BASSETERRE ROADS.

He had fired over the heads of the rebellious prisoners.

Instantly there was a rush toward him, and he was pinned up against the door. He tried to use the other pistol, but he was too tightly pressed. He struck out and kicked, he pushed, and at last he released his pistol so that he was able to point it in the face of the ringleader.

He pulled the trigger and the hammer fell, but though a spark fell into the pan, the powder had fallen out, and no report followed. Maddened at the result, he raised the weapon and gave the foremost man such a blow in the face, that he fell back and tripped over some obstruction on the floor.

His fall caused several of the others to fall over him, and that gave Stephen an opportunity to re-open the armory and arm himself with another pistol.

The sea was running high. Great waves dashed over the deck of the ship, and the rigging rattled until it was impossible for those on deck to hear an ordinary pistol shot.

Decatur then emerged from the armory, and with a pistol in each hand, ordered the men on deck.

One of the prisoners who understood more English than his fellows, demanded to know by what right Decatur interfered with them.

"By what right? You are my prisoners, for I represent the United States. Go on deck, and you may get off with light punishment, but dare you to lay a hand on me, and you shall all be strung up to the yardarm, ay, every one of you."

"Put down that popgun," said the man.

As he spoke, he tried to knock it out of Decatur's hand, but not only did he fail, but he received the contents in his face and fell to the deck, horribly mutilated and dying. The sight of his wounds unnerved the others, and they hurried to the deck to seek their captain and lay a charge against Decatur of murder. But the second pistol shot had been heard, and Lieut. Somers, with a number of men, met the prisoners as they came up the companion ladder.

He quickly marshaled them on deck, and ordered his men to kill the first that attempted to move. Then he sent down to the lower deck and learned from Decatur what had happened.

Capt. Barron was summoned, and the complaint laid before him. The prisoners were no longer allowed their freedom, but placed in irons, and even their captain was placed under control.

"Once again you have saved the ship, Decatur, and you shall not be forgotten," Commodore Barry exclaimed, as he grasped the young officer's hand.

"We must get rid of these prisoners, commodore."

"Yes, captain, and I think it well to sail for Guadaloupe, and see if we can exchange them for an equal number of our men."

"An equal number, commodore? Surely you ought to get two of our men for one of these odd fish."

"Why?"

"Because such animals ought to be scarce, and therefore valuable to the enemy."

"Why do you speak like that of them?"

"Because they repaid our kindness by mutiny. Even a dog will be grateful."

Orders were given to proceed to Guadaloupe, and after a quick passage, the *United States* entered Basseterre roads, carrying a white flag.

When within effective range the French batteries opened fire on the ship, disregarding the flag of truce.

Barry was grand in his fury.

"Haul down that white flag," he commanded, "and let the Stars and Stripes go up."

There was a loud cheer from the sailors when they saw the loved flag rise and take its place above them.

As the guns were got ready, the men sang patriotic songs, and so near were they to the coast at times, that the words could be heard by the men on the island.

"Yankee sailors love their soil.
Haul away! Yo ho, boys!
And for glory ne'er spare toil,
But flog its foes, you know, boys!
Then while its standard owns a rag,
The world combined shall never brag
They made us strike the Yankee flag.
Haul away! Yo ho, boys!"

Shot followed shot from the batteries on the island, but Barry was in no hurry. He kept moving round the harbor, moving in eccentric courses, and no shot had done any damage.

But when the guns of the *United States* were ready, he changed his tactics and headed the vessel for the biggest and noisiest battery.

When within effective distance, he swung the frigate round and fired a broadside, with such effect, that some of the enemy's guns were silenced.

He knew he was not strong enough to effectually destroy the forts, but he was determined to leave his mark there, and he did, so thoroughly, that years after the marks of his bombardment could be seen.

Although the men loved the sea, yet there was general rejoicing when the bow of the good frigate was pointed toward home, and loudly and often did the crew sing:

"Strike eight bells,
Call the watch,
Relieve the wheel and chain.
Won't we have a jolly time,
When we get home again?"

But before the coast of dear old America was sighted the frigate encountered another storm, a gale which made many a ship go to the bottom, and tried the utmost strength of the *United States*. Many a sailor would rather face an enemy's vessel, and have bullets flying round him like hail, than have to endure such a storm as that which the frigate weathered before the Delaware was reached. One of the boats was lost, and several of the seamen were injured, but the frigate reached Chester as proudly as when she had set forth.

The men sang as the ship anchored:

“Won't we have a jolly time,
When we get home again?”

CHAPTER XI.

THE DUEL.

"Somers and Decatur, you are wanted by the commodore."

The ship had been at anchor three days, and the two young officers naturally wondered for what they were wanted.

"Gentlemen," commenced the veteran, who was always courteous, "we have sailed together, and I trust may do so again. But life is uncertain, so I have asked the government to secure you for life, if that be possible. You are young, active, brave and just the young men the nation must depend upon. I have here commissions signed by President Adams conferring on you the rank of lieutenant. You have both acted as lieutenants, and have nobly performed the duties; it is therefore proper that you should have the legal rank."

The old commodore handed to each midshipman his commission, and both replied, though scarcely knowing how to frame their thanks.

Again Somers ranked higher than Decatur, though it was carefully stated that no reflection was intended on Decatur, the commissions being based on the previous commissions as midshipmen.

"Somers, I have work for you on the ship, but if you wish a furlough for a few days you can have it."

"Thank you, commodore, I should like to have a week."

"The necessary papers shall be made out. Good-day."

Decatur was about leaving at the same time, but the commodore intimated that he had some other work for him.

"Your home is in Philadelphia, I believe?"

"Yes, commodore."

"Then I shall want you to go to that city and engage a crew for the *United States*. You know the term of enlistment has run out."

"An entire crew?"

"Yes. It is well to change hands, besides these men are wanted by Commodore Thruxton."

"I will do my best."

"Take your time over it. Select the best men you can find, and when once you have got them do not let anyone take them away from you."

"When am I to report with the crew?"

"In one month. It will take you that time, because you will not want to hurry."

There is no doubt that Decatur was selected for this honorable duty because the commodore wanted to specially favor him.

Off the young lieutenant started for home, taking to his mother a bag of coffee and two barrels of sugar, which he had purchased for her at Martinique.

Every day found him at the docks, and, in company with Francis Gurney Smith, talking to and testing the men who were looking for ships.

He succeeded in recruiting some prime seamen, men who would be an honor to the navy and a credit to the country. Three days after he learned that these same men had been shipped on board an Indiaman. Such conduct was not to be tolerated. Decatur had first claim on the men. He represented the government, and would not allow anyone to take his men away, and he remembered the words of the commodore: "Don't let anyone get them away from you."

With a consciousness of right, and a feeling of the responsibility of his position, he took his shipping articles with him, and went on board the Indiaman to reclaim his men. The chief mate was a high-spirited

fellow, and denied the right of Decatur to take the men away from him.

"I represent the government. I am an officer in the navy," said Decatur, proudly.

"And I am chief mate of this ship, and the men have shipped with me, and with me they will stay."

"I beg your pardon, sir, but here are the articles they signed, dated prior to yours."

"Very likely, but they are on board my ship, and I defy you to take them away."

"Take care, sir. Defy is a strong word to use to an officer in the navy."

The chief mate was angry because he badly wanted the men, expecting much assistance from them in the performance of the arduous duties of a long voyage. He stepped nearer to Decatur and snapped his fingers in his face.

"That for your navy, as you call it. Navy, indeed! Nothing but a lot of old hulks worthless for anything, unless to catch herrings."

"Sir, I cannot listen to such insults."

"Cannot you? Then you will have to leave the ship."

"I am quite ready to do so, as soon as I get my men."

"They shall not go."

"Excuse me, sir. You will want to put into this port again, and it may be difficult for you to clear them if you so violate the laws which govern navigation."

The merchantman knew that Decatur was right, but he lost his temper, and not only insulted the navy, but said many disparaging things about the officers. Decatur did not get excited, but waited until the effervescence of temper had passed off and then he renewed his demand for the men.

He got his men and left the ship in triumph. His father had returned home awaiting the repairs to the *Delaware*, and to him young Stephen told of his adventure on board the merchantman. Three times did

the elder Decatur ask his son to repeat the exact words used by the chief mate.

"My son, much as I regret it, I do not see any other conclusion but that you have been insulted, and that the government has also been insulted."

"I cannot see it in any other light, father, though I have got the men."

"Yes, but he must apologize, or you will have to call him out."

"You think so?"

"There is no alternative."

"Then I must send and ask for an apology?"

"That is the proper thing to do."

Stephen saw that he must fight a duel unless the merchant officer apologized, and that he did not think he would do. Somers was in the city on leave at the time, and to him he intrusted the message to the mate.

"Lieut. Somers, I am pleased to see any officers of the United States Navy, but I must decline to apologize for any words uttered to Lieut. Decatur."

"Is that your final answer?"

"It is."

"You know what such a message will lead to?"

"I am not deficient in my knowledge of the laws which govern the code of honor."

The two officers shook hands and parted. Somers reported to Decatur the failure of his mission, and Stephen sat down and wrote a carefully worded challenge. Again Somers boarded the Indiaman and presented his message to the chief mate.

"This requires a written answer, so if you will honor me by your forbearance I will write my reply."

"Take your own time, sir. I am at your service."

The two bowed, exchanged pinches of snuff, bowed again, and then Somers waited while the officer wrote an acceptance of the challenge. Decatur naturally expected that the affair would be arranged at once, but as the days passed and he heard nothing he began

to believe that the paper duel was the only one he would have to fight. The recruiting was completed. The *United States* was ready for sea. There was no excuse for delay, so Stephen Decatur reported for duty.

The ship was lying off New Castle waiting for last orders from the naval department, which might come at any moment. And close besides the *United States* anchored the Indiaman. The mate deferred private duties until he had the ship ready for sea, and so had not taken any further notice of the challenge until he could feel free to carry the duel through.

On the first morning after the Indiaman had anchored off New Castle, the chief mate came on board the *United States* and asked for Lieut. Decatur.

"I am ready, sir," was his salutation when the young lieutenant stepped up to him.

"So am I, sir."

"It is usual, I believe, for little affairs of this kind to be arranged by friends; will you name your friends?"

"Lieut. Somers, and yours?"

"Second Mate Gregory, at your service."

"When can they meet?"

"At once, if you say so."

Decatur called Somers and bade him act as his friend, and go to the merchantman to meet Officer Gregory and with him arrange the duel.

"You will find Mr. Gregory a gentleman."

"I am well aware of that, for I believe he was educated at the university."

"He was, and was a student at Abercrombie's before you gentlemen went there."

While the preliminaries were being arranged Decatur talked over his affairs with Stewart.

"I am not afraid, you know, Stewart, but it is as well to leave things in shipshape."

"You will have the advantage, as it is not likely he will be an expert with arms."

"That constitutes my only danger, for I shall merely wound him in the hip, while he may aim for my heart."

"And miss it."

"I hope so."

The time of the duel was fixed for that evening. Both vessels were ready to sail, and therefore no time could be lost. The two met, in accordance with the custom of the time. Once more the merchantman was asked to apologize, and again he declined. Then the distance was measured and the men stood face to face, each armed with a weapon which carried a death-dealing bullet in its barrel.

The word of command was given:

"Take aim!"

Each man looked at the priming and saw that it was right, and each stood with weapon ready for the final command to be given:

"Fire!"

Two reports rang out simultaneously. The merchantman put his hand to his hip, and tried to stop the little spurt of blood. Decatur was unhurt. He walked over to his antagonist and expressed a hope that he was not in much pain.

"No, I have to thank your forbearance."

"Honor is satisfied. You know it would never do to allow the service to be insulted."

And in this chivalrous fashion did Stephen Decatur fight his first duel.

CHAPTER XII.

SPANISH INSULT RESENTED.

While the next few months were full of interesting incidents in the life of our hero, they were incidents of peace, and, therefore, perhaps not exciting enough for our readers. The Marquis de Talleyrand, the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the French Republic, had given our government an assurance that if envoys were sent to France they would be well received, and most likely an honorable peace agreed upon.

The President appointed Messrs. Ellsworth and Davie as envoys, and in order to impress the French Government with their importance he ordered the *United States* to convey them to France. France was beginning to realize that our small navy would be able to assert the right of the nation to a pathway over the seas, and the deeds of Thruxton and other commanders caused France to promise a good reception to the new envoys.

"Don't trust the government too much," was the quiet instructions given to the envoys.

Acting upon this, the *United States* proceeded to Lisbon, where the information was satisfactory.

Putting to sea again with the envoys, the *United States* intended making L'Orient, but a heavy eastern gale, followed by a terrific storm, drove the ship out of the Bay of Biscay into the British Channel.

After tossing about for a month the envoys asked to be landed at the nearest port whence they could go overland to Paris.

The *United States* put into Corunna and waited there for return dispatches.

Commodore Barry sailed from Corunna on the fif-

teenth of March, and landed at Chester, in the Delaware, exactly one month later.

It was found that the frigate was in a very bad state through the rough weather encountered in the Bay of Biscay, and it became necessary to dismantle her and overhaul her completely.

The citizens of Philadelphia had built a beautiful new frigate and presented it to the government on two conditions, one that it was to be named the *Philadelphia*, the other that it was to be commanded by the elder Decatur.

Stephen, not liking to be idle, asked to be transferred to the brig *Norfolk*, which was about to sail to the Spanish Main, and when that taut ship left it had Lieut. Decatur as one of its officers.

He had hoped to see active service, but was again doomed to disappointment, for the cruise was unsuccessful, and the *Norfolk* returned home just as the *United States* was ready to leave.

Commodore Barry asked Decatur to return to his ship, and he was glad to do so. Active work was promised for the *United States*, and the officers and crew, from the commodore to the powder-monkey, anticipated covering themselves with glory.

She sailed for Guadaloupe and intended releasing many American prisoners confined there. Again disappointment awaited them, for before any active work could be engaged in peace was declared, and France acknowledged some of the obligations of international comity, and acted with justice toward American ships.

Congress ordered the disbanding of the navy, all the ships to be sold save thirteen, and only six of these to be in commission. It was also ordered that the President discharge from the service all but nine of the captains, all the commanders, and all but thirty-six out of the hundred and ten lieutenants. The elder Decatur resigned, and thus saved the President considering his claims, but Stephen was retained as lieu-

tenant, and his younger brother, James, as midshipman in the small navy.

Perhaps the dismantling of the navy was the best thing that could have happened for Decatur.

It is strange how the smallest things sometimes have the greatest bearing on the future of individuals. The duel with the merchant officer had been reported to headquarters, and doubtless had the greatest influence in retaining Decatur in the service.

While the navy was being disbanded at home there was excitement and commotion abroad.

The Bashaw of Tripoli, a despotic ruler, appointed by the Sultan of Turkey, was aggrieved. He called his counsel of state together, and when they had made obeisance, which they did by crawling on their stomachs, he bade them advise him.

"By the beard of the prophet those Yankees are a bad lot."

"They are, your excellency," chorused the advisers.

"They have not treated us right."

"They have not."

The bashaw turned suddenly to his chief of the harem and asked:

"In what way have they failed?"

The chief of the harem stroked the long beard which reached to his waist, and instead of uttering words of explanation, he answered with the cunning of Oriental statesmen:

"Because your excellency says they have not, and your excellency is the light of the world."

"You have answered most convincingly. Now, these Yankees have paid the tribute they agreed to pay——"

"They have."

"But they did better for the Bey of Algiers."

"They did."

"Am I not as good as the bey?"

"Better."

"By the beard of the prophet I should say I am."

Then why did those Yankees give him a frigate and not one to me?"

"They should have given you two."

"Did not one of the ministers, a man like you, my worthy chief of the harem, receive a large present? Did you receive any?"

"No, your excellency."

"I thought not, or you would have given it to me. Now, the chief of the harem of the Bey of Tunis received forty thousand dollars, while you received nothing, and I only got fifty thousand dollars. Is that right?"

"It is wrong, your excellency."

"By the beard of the prophet this must be all changed, we must make these Yankees give us more than they gave Tunis or Algiers, or by the tomb of Mahomet we must help ourselves."

"We must."

"Most worthy servants of the most high and mighty Bashaw of Tripoli, upon whom the sun shines all the time, you have counseled wisely and you shall not be forgotten. Now, Gulnar, how much should I ask?"

"Your excellency has such good judgment that it is not for Gulnar nor anyone like him to say."

"Most wise Gulnar, you ever counsel wisely, therefore it shall be as you say. The Yankees shall pay us double what they have given to the Bey of Tunis or the Bey of Algiers, and most worthy Gulnar, if we are not able to get it, you shall raise it for me."

Gulnar did not like that, but he knew he would have to raise it or lose his head, and his head was far more valuable to him on his shoulders than it would be if he had it cut off by the scimiter of the court executioner.

The council was over, and the bashaw ordered Gulnar to make the request to the American consul.

"Tell him we must have an answer at once, or by the beard of the prophet we will take all we can."

Then in a low voice he said :

"The Yankees have sold their ships of war, and could not fight if they wanted to, and there are some rich merchantmen in the Mediterranean which will pay us more than they would ever give. So haste thee, good Gulnar, and bring back the answer of the consul."

The old bashaw was worldly wise, and knew just when to strike, or thought he did. He ruled with a rod of iron, or to be more correct, by means of the scimiter of the executioner, and the strong hand of the garroter. It would take two months at the shortest for the consul to send to America and receive an answer in reply, and the bashaw gave him ten days to obtain the concession asked for.

On May 10, 1801, he sent word to the consul that not having received any reply, he declared war on the Yankee nation, otherwise known as the United States of America, and that on the fourteenth he would take down the American flagstaff.

He carried out his threat to the letter and war was declared against the United States. The United States, ignorant of the action of the ruler of Tripoli, thought it advisable to take precautions, and so dispatched a small squadron to the Mediterranean Sea. The showy frigates looked defiant as they sailed out of the Delaware, the broad pennant of Commodore Richard Dale floating from the *President*, commanded by Capt. James Barron; then came the *Philadelphia*, commanded by Samuel Barron, and the *Essex*, officered by Capt. William Bainbridge, and followed by the schooner *Enterprise*, under command of Lieut. A. Sterrett.

Capt. Bainbridge had asked for and obtained the services of Stephen Decatur, who had only been in the navy three years and yet was deemed able to take the position of first lieutenant. The fleet arrived at Gibraltar on the first of July, and found the Tripolitan admiral lying in the harbor with a frigate of twenty-

six and a brig of sixteen guns. The admiral was surprised to see an American fleet, and at once denied that his country was at war with the United States.

There was something suspicious about the Tripolitan fleet being there, and so Commodore Dale left the *Philadelphia* to watch the admiral.

The *Essex* was dispatched along the northern coast of the Mediterranean to collect and convoy out of the straits all the homeward-bound American vessels that might be collected at intermediate ports.

In the harbor of Barcelona there was lying a Spanish man-of-war as a guardship. The *Essex* was so much her superior that comparisons were made and even prophecies were indulged in that some day Spain would lose all her American colonies and that the United States would gain them.

Up to that time the Spanish officers had been lionized, but now had to take second place. Lieut. Decatur had been entertained by the mayor of the city, and was returning to the *Essex* late at night when the Spaniard ordered the boat to lay to. Decatur ordered the men to pull for the *Essex*. A shot was fired across her bow, and the lieutenant stood up in the boat and demanded to know by what right the Spaniard had fired.

An insulting reply was made, and the Spaniard insisted that he had a right to stop and search every boat in the harbor. When Decatur demanded an apology it was granted, but in an insulting manner.

The next night Capt. Bainbridge was served in the same way, and he demanded through the American consul an apology and damages. While waiting for a reply from Madrid, the Spaniard again insulted the American by firing over Decatur's boat.

"I'll not stand this!" exclaimed the young lieutenant to his captain the next morning.

"What can you do, Decatur?"

"Make the lieutenant of the Spanish man-of-war apologize or fight."

"You can act as you think best."

A boat was ordered lowered and the young lieutenant was taken to the offending Spaniard. He went on deck alone and demanded to see the lieutenant who had so insulted him.

"No officer of this ship insults honest men," answered the officer.

"Do you mean that I was not insulted?"

"I know nothing about that."

"Then you insinuate that I am not honest?"

"Take it as you please."

"Your name, sir, for I shall show you that an officer of the United States navy will take insults from no man."

"What navy did you say?"

"The United States."

The Spanish officer turned to a middy and bade him fetch a gazetteer so that he could find where the United States was. Insult followed insult, and Decatur again asked the name of the insulter.

"I am Lieut. Pedro Garcia, of the Spanish navy."

"And I am Lieut. Stephen Decatur, of the United States navy."

"I am pleased to accept your challenge, Mr. Decatur, and will meet you whenever you please."

"Now; choose your weapons."

"No, Mr. Decatur, you ought to know that no duel can take place under the Spanish flag."

"I am proud to say that under the flag of the United States insults can always be wiped out."

"I will meet you on land at a time to be arranged."

"Very well. Now tell me the name of the officer who fired on my boat last night."

"The officer is not on board, but he desired me to say that he was sorry that he had not loaded with ball and sent your boat to the bottom."

"When will he be on board?"

"Cannot say."

Decatur walked to the taffrail and called to the men in his boat:

"Return to the *Essex* and tell Capt. Bainbridge that I am going to stay on this ship until I get satisfaction and wipe out the insult offered our flag."

"Ay, ay, sir."

The boat pulled away and Decatur sat down on a coil of rope to wait the return of the officer who had insulted the United States flag.

"You cannot stay here," exclaimed the officer.

"But I am staying, and shall stay until I have made you apologize for the insult to my nation."

"I shall order you to be put in irons."

"Do so, and the United States will wipe Spain out of the map of the world unless reparation is made."

Never before had an officer of proud Castile met such a defiant and aggressive foreigner as Stephen Decatur. The young lieutenant sat still, his legs crossed, and his whole body as calm as though he were an honored guest, while the Spanish officer went to report his conduct to his captain.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CAPTURE OF THE "TRIPOLI."

While Decatur was engaged in bringing the proud Castilian to his knees by conduct bolder than had ever been known on a man-of-war, the brave young lieutenant, Sterrett, lying off Malta, was making Tripoli feel that it did not pay to insult the navy of the United States.

The *Enterprise* had only twelve light guns, while the *Tripoli* had fourteen heavy ones, and was commanded by the veteran Rais Mahomet Sous.

There had been no means of letting Sterrett know that Tripoli had declared war against the United States, and therefore he was almost unprepared when the *Tripoli* called on him to surrender.

He had noticed that the *Tripoli* had been lying apparently in wait, perhaps for some unlucky merchantman, for the Barbary regencies were little better than piratical nations, using their war ships for the purposes of plunder.

Her yards were on the caps when she floated idly on the waters, as if her captain was too lazy to hoist them in the proper place. But when the *Enterprise* was within gunshot distance, a change took place. All was life and animation on the *Tripoli*.

The yards rose like magic to the heads of the topmasts, and the courses dropped to the deck and were sheeted home.

A long gun was pointed across the bow of the *Enterprise* and fired. It was a signal of hostilities, a demand to surrender.

"Beat to quarters," cried Sterrett.

"You are not going to tackle that frigate?" asked the acting first lieutenant.

"I am, sir, and I shall bring the insulter to my knees!"

"Excuse me, sir, but that is the *Tripoli*, and she carries more and heavier guns than we do."

"I don't care if she carried a hundred guns, I should tackle her just the same, for no man, admiral or commodore, shall insult the United States flag while I am serving under it."

The sharp rattle of the drum echoed through the rigging of the little American schooner and the men quickly responded to the call. They were at their posts at the guns and by the sheets and halliards as quietly as if they had been automatons.

The *Enterprise* carried one long gun and eleven small ones. So the lieutenant had but little chance against the enemy.

"Cast loose the long gun, load her up at once."

In about forty seconds the long gun was cast loose and loaded. Sterrett looked over his men, and from practical experience knew the capabilities of each.

"Hamilton, come here. Take your place by the long gun. I reckon you are the sharpest sight on board."

"I can see through a stone wall as well as the best of them," answered Hamilton with a grin.

"Take a sight. The enemy must be crippled. We must rely on strategy rather than strength. Where do you think you can strike her?"

"Anywhere you say, cap'n."

"All right, Hamilton, do the best you can."

"It's breezy here," said Lieut. Markham, as a shot from the *Tripoli* swept over the deck, doing no damage save knocking over a barrel of water.

Hamilton had carefully sighted his long gun. He was in no hurry, he wanted to hit something more than a barrel of water when he fired.

Away sped the shot with a sharp hum, and Sterrett

watched its course through his glass. There was a cloud of spray, followed by another and then another as the shot skimmed over the waves, its velocity decreasing as it neared the enemy.

There was a crash of timber, and everyone knew that the *Tripoli* had been hit.

The enemy was now alive with active men. She bore down on the schooner and poured a broadside into the Americans, but little damage was done.

Sterrett saw his advantage, and getting the *Enterprise* in a raking position, returned the broadside, some of his shots ripping holes in the *Tripoli*.

The waves were covered with the spray of passing shots as they skimmed over the top of the crests.

Sterrett called to Hamilton:

"Can you take down her mizzenmast?"

"I can try, sir."

"I want certainty. Can you do it?"

"Yes, sir."

"That's better. Let her rip."

Hamilton, proud of the confidence placed in his skill, watched his opportunity and aimed his long gun carefully.

The *Tripoli* poured another broadside into the schooner, killing a gunner and wounding a seaman.

But scarcely had the cheers of the enemy testified to their delight than Hamilton's long gun had sent out its puff of smoke, and soon there was a snapping and crashing as the mizzenmast of the *Tripoli* went over the deck into the blue waters of the Mediterranean.

It carried the ensign with it, and there was a rousing cheer from the men on the *Enterprise*.

"Look yonder, sir," cried Lieut. Markham. "She is striking!"

"I believe you are right," answered the brave Sterrett.

It was true. The *Tripoli*, with the valiant Rais Ma-

homet Sous as commander, had surrendered to the little American schooner.

Sterrett had no orders to make any captures, so he threw overboard all her guns and ammunition, cut away her masts and completely dismantled her, leaving her only one spar and a single sail to drift back to Tripoli.

"Tell the bashaw that you have received the only tribute he will ever get again from the American nation," said Sterrett, when he bade the humiliated admiral farewell.

As the *Tripoli* drifted away, and the decks of the *Enterprise* were washed down, the men raised their voices in singing:

"Heave the topmast from the board,
And our deck for action clear.
By the cannon and the sword,
We will die to conquer here.
The foe, with daring mein, nears fast;
To your posts, my faithful tars!
Mind your rigging, guns and spars,
And defend your Stripes and Stars
To the last.

"At the captain's bold command
Flew each sailor to his gun,
And resolved he there would stand,
Though the odds were two to one,
To defend his flag and ship with his life.
High on every mast displayed,
'God, our country, and our rights!'
E'en the bravest braver made,
For the strife.

"Fierce the storm of battle pours;
But unmoved as ocean's rock
When the tempest round it roars,
Every seaman breasts the shock,
Boldly stepping where his brave messmates fall.
O'er his head, full oft and loud,
Like the vulture in a cloud,
As it cuts the twangling shroud,
Screams the ball."

"That's a rattling good song, Hamilton. It seems to me you can sing as well as shoot."

"I was brought up to do both, sir."

"Is that the whole of the song?"

"No, sir. Only the other verses tell of the slaughter on board, but there is a glory in that for :

"Drops the sheared and riven mast,
By the bolt of battle riven,
And higher heaps the ruin of the deck,
As the sailor, bleeding, dies,
To his comrades lifts his eyes,
'Let our flag still wave!' he cries,
O'er the wreck."

When the *Tripoli* arrived home the admiral had to make a sorry report.

True, he magnified the size of the enemy's ship and the number of the guns used against him, but the bashaw retorted :

"An admiral of Tripoli should never submit to defeat."

"Where are your guns?" asked the grand vizier.

"Alas! Guns and ammunition are all at the bottom of the sea."

"You are disgraced," exclaimed the bashaw.

"On my face I lie before you, gracious master, and implore thee to remember the victories I have gained in the past, and the trophies I have brought to Tripoli."

"They are remembered, or you should lose your worthless head. All your estate shall be confiscated to pay for the guns, and you shall receive the punishment of the bastinado, you dog of a coward."

So the poor admiral of the fleet not only had to suffer the humiliation of defeat, but physical torture and loss of all his wealth as well.

The populace were entertained by the sight of the great admiral of Tripoli riding backward on a donkey through the streets, while paid servitors proclaimed

his disgrace and called for the people to hoot at and pelt him with mud.

Then came the terrible torture of the bastinado, which almost made him lose his reason. And all because he was outwitted by the American.

CHAPTER XIV.

PLAYING WITH EDGED TOOLS.

Decatur waited on the deck of the Spanish war ship for the officer who had insulted the American flag, for some time.

The captain walked up to him and saluted. Decatur rose and returned the courtesy.

"You serve the United States of America, I believe?"

"I have that honor."

"You consider that you have been personally insulted by one of my officers?"

"No, captain, for an insult offered to me personally I would not waste one minute's time, the insult was to the flag under which I sail."

"Do you command the American vessel?"

"I have not that honor."

"Are you commissioned by the captain?"

"No."

"Then I do not recognize your right to remain on my ship to avenge an insult, real or imaginary, offered to your ship, which you are not commissioned to represent."

"Pardon me, captain, I—I——"

"Pardon me, I speak according to the law of nations and international comity."

"I care nothing for that. I am not a subject of a monarchy, but a citizen of a free republic, and every citizen has a right to avenge an insult offered to his flag."

"You are young. When you are older you will act more discreetly."

"Sir, it may be the policy of Spain to allow its sub-

jects to turn away when an insult is offered, but I trust I may never live to see a day come when an American will hesitate to wipe out such an outrage in blood."

"The officer you seek is not here."

"So I have been told."

"Then why do you stay?"

"I shall wait for him."

"Pardon me, but this is not a passenger ship, and the officer is on shore duty. He will not return to the ship to-day."

"Is that the truth?"

"I am a Castilian officer."

"And I am an American officer. His name?"

"Lieut. Puerez."

"I thank you for the name and I will seek him on land. I salute you."

The officer saluted; the Spaniard conducted the American to the side of the ship and watched him descend to his boat.

Then, as the Americans pulled away from the Spaniard, the officers saluted once more and the affair was at an end.

"Hot-headed young fool!" exclaimed the Spanish captain; "he will run his head into a noose some day."

"*Poco barba, poco saber!*" muttered the first lieutenant, which, being translated, means "Little beard, little wisdom."

Decatur ordered his men to pull for the shore, and on land he sought for the Spanish officer, but without success. He began to think that the Spaniard had deceived him, and he was furious.

He returned to the *Essex* and told Capt. Bainbridge how he had been served.

"I will call him out and kill him yet."

"I can understand your feelings, Decatur, but we are serving a great nation and we are supposed to be at peace with Spain. The captain-general of Catalonia

has heard of the insult and asked me to avert a meeting. I have promised. It is now for you to submit."

Decatur was too good an officer to disobey, but he felt that he had been badly treated, and he confided his troubles to a young midshipman, a native of Delaware, to whom he had taken a great fancy.

Thomas McDonough was a cool, cautious, but exceedingly skillful man, and there being but little difference in the ages of the first officer and the midshipman they became chums, especially dearer to each other because Somers was not on the same ship, and Decatur missed him greatly.

The *Essex* was lying off Malaga when the British man-of-war, the *Thunderer*, anchored near by.

"I don't like that action," said Bainbridge to Decatur.

"What do you think?"

"We have some good men on board, and if they are caught on shore they will be pressed."

"The British would never dare."

"Do not make any mistake, Decatur. We shall have trouble with Old England over that before long. You know England maintains that we are all subjects of the king even yet, and, therefore, it is no crime to steal any of our men."

"But the treaty?"

"The treaty is all right, but you know England can always find a way to slip through."

While they were talking McDonough saluted.

"What is it, McDonough?"

"Please, sir, one of our men has slipped over the side and is swimming for the Britisher."

"Deserted?"

"Yes, sir. He is a New Yorker by birth, and so within the treaty."

"Lower the fastest boat and bring him back, if you can."

McDonough was not a moment in taking action.

The fastest cutter was lowered from the davits and the young midddy swung himself into the boat and was pulled in the direction the swimmer was taking.

But as the deserter reached the *Thunderer* a line was thrown him and he was drawn up through a port-hole. McDonough was not a moment in running up the gangway and on to the quarter-deck.

He demanded to see the captain. The first officer, who was a relative of the captain, asked him insultingly his business and by what right he, a midshipman, asked to see anyone higher in rank than himself.

McDonough did not reply, but again asked to see the captain.

"Well, young man, what do you want?" asked a red-faced old curmudgeon of a captain.

"You have a deserter from the United States ship *Essex* on board."

"Indeed, and how do you know?"

"I saw him drawn on board by a line thrown to him."

"Perhaps he is a British subject; if so, you have no right to him."

"He is a native of New York."

"In that case I must return him to the *Essex*."

"Thank you, captain."

"I must have proofs."

McDonough produced the sailing articles signed by the man, in which he declared that he was a native of New York.

"Call the man."

The deserter came on deck, and the captain asked him if he had shipped on the *Essex*.

He admitted that he had done so.

"Are you American or British?"

"English, your honor."

"That settles it; the man's word must be taken. He is a British subject, and did quite right in leaving your ship."

McDonough knew that such was the liberal interpretation put upon the treaty by England, and, though almost raving mad, he had to return to the *Essex* without the deserter.

Two days later he was able to pay back in kind. An Irishman, racy of the soil and speaking in a brogue which could not be mistaken, managed to slip into the water and reach the *Essex*.

The *Thunderer* was afraid of asking for his return after the shabby way in which the demand of the *Essex* had been answered, but as the Irishman was a valuable man the English determined to kidnap him.

O'Shaughnessy was very careful for a day, but forgot his caution the day before the *Essex* was to sail, and went on land. He was standing on the dock when he was seized round the waist and thrown violently into the *Thunderer's* boat.

He was quickly bound, and the boat pulled out from land with the valuable prize lying in its bottom. McDonough was also on land and heard the shouts of the Irishman, who was invoking all the saints in the calendar and cursing the British alternately.

"Into the boat; quick, lads. We must have that man even if we have to fight for him."

The men were nothing loath, but pulled their knives round so that they were more available. They plied their oars until the boat fairly leaped the waves and overhauled the Britisher.

"Give up that man," shouted McDonough.

"He is a deserter."

"He is one of the crew of the *Essex*."

"It is false. He is our prisoner and we——"

McDonough and Simpson, a strong sailor, had leaned over the side of the boat and seized O'Shaughnessy by the belt and dragged him into the boat.

"Now, boys, pull for your lives."

The British demanded the return of the deserter, and Capt. Bainbridge referred the officer to Decatur.

"The man is no deserter, sir," said Decatur, calmly; "he is an American.

"Mr. McDonough, will you order O'Shaughnessy to step this way.

"Are you American or English?" inquired Decatur.

"Sure, yer honor, it's Ammericun I am, an' its me-self that could not spake a blessed worud of English if Saint Pathrick ordered me."

Turning to the English officer he added:

"You see, sir, that I have no alternative. I must deny your request, for it is a rule to accept a man's word, for surely he ought to know his nationality best. I have the honor to salute you and wish you good-day."

CHAPTER XV.

THE CODE OF HONOR.

The British hated Commodore Dale perhaps more than any other man in the service, for he had been with Paul Jones when the *Serapis* had been captured, and had on many occasions proved that he could fight as well as his former chief.

It was with a feeling of satisfaction that the British heard Dale was to return to the United States with the *President* and *Enterprise*, leaving only the *Philadelphia* and *Essex* to watch the Tripolitan fleet, and to prevent any of the pirates passing Gibraltar and going into the Atlantic.

The work was monotonous and without honor or glory, and no man rejoiced more than Stephen Decatur when the *Essex* was relieved by the arrival of the frigate *Chesapeake* in command of Commodore Richard Morris.

Decatur arrived home in July and gave himself two weeks' rest, before joining as first lieutenant on the frigate *New York*, of thirty-six guns, commanded by his old friend, Capt. James Barron.

It was a grand sight to see the fleet sail out of the harbor, thoroughly equipped and manned.

The people cheered and the flags were flung to the breeze as the frigates, the *New York*, *Adams* and *John Adams*, and the schooner *Enterprise* sailed away to make war on the Tripolitan pirates, for Congress had furnished Commodore Morris with liberal orders to employ his ample force in such manner as would bring the Bashaw of Tripoli to terms speedily.

The fleet reached Malta, and after taking on board more food, started for the southern coast of the Medi-

terranean, every man dreaming dreams of the spoils he would carry home from Tripoli.

But one day out from Malta a sudden storm sprang up and endangered the entire fleet.

After tossing about in the trough of the sea for some time the order was given to seek safety in port, and once more the American fleet anchored off Malta.

As we are writing history, history of an exciting time in the early days of the nation, we must not pass over an episode, tragical and painful, which led to Decatur being sent back to the United States before the cruise of the New York was finished.

Midshipman Joseph Bainbridge was master's mate in the hold, and to him came Midshipman Terry and asked permission to go on shore.

"And what do you wish to do on shore? Tell me that. Is it to desert the ship? Or is it to look after the pretty girls whose nimble fingers make such exquisite lace?"

"Neither, good Bainbridge, but they do say that at the theater to-night there shall be enacted a tragedy by the great writer, Shakespeare, and that some marvelous good actors are to play."

"In that case I do not think you ought to have permission."

"Why?"

"Because there will be many beautiful girls there, and they are all English subjects, you know, and you might be led to desert."

"Can you not trust me?"

"No, I cannot, but if you are so set on going, I might allow you to go if there was anyone to take care of you, say if I should go."

"You go? That would be the best pleasure a man could have."

"Well, I'm going, good Mr. Terry, and if you are willing I will speak for permission for you as well."

Permission was readily granted, for both middies

were sober, cautious young men, and could be trusted anywhere. The theater was well filled and the acting was worthy the patronage of the society people of Malta. Near to the two Americans were two British officers, one being the private secretary of Sir Alexander Ball, the governor of the island.

The Britishers nudged each other, and began to whisper about the Americans. Then the curtain dropped, and one of the officers talked long about the cowardice of the Yankees, and hinted that the war with Tripoli was only a big bluff.

"Those Yankees will never stand the smell of powder," said one, and the other replied with an equally insulting remark.

"Come out into the lobby," whispered Bainbridge to his fellow messmate.

The two began to talk about the language they had heard, and both agreed that it was intended to be insulting.

"What shall we do about it?" asked Bainbridge.

Before Terry could reply the British officers had forced themselves between the Americans, giving Bainbridge a nasty push. Then there was a laugh, and the offensive act was repeated.

"Come back into the theater," whispered Terry.

Again the governor's private secretary pushed against Bainbridge, who in turn, not being able to control himself any longer, raised his hand and knocked the fellow down.

Bainbridge was but a boy, while the private secretary was a full-grown man. Bainbridge was a foreigner, and should have been treated with courtesy, but the officer was a bully and a noted duelist, who openly made it his boast that he had laid low more men than any other bravo in Malta.

The Americans left the theater and went on board the *New York*.

On the following morning a challenge was received by Midshipman Bainbridge.

Decatur heard of it and sent for Bainbridge.

"You have received a challenge?"

"Yes, sir."

"Tell me all about the cause."

The young middy did so, and Decatur listened silently to the narration.

"You will have to fight."

"Yes, sir."

"Your antagonist is a professional duelist, who challenges everyone in his own rank whom he thinks he can kill. You have no chance."

"Then I must die."

"You must leave the matter with me. I will be your second."

"I had asked Midshipman Terry."

"What does he know about the code of dueling? I say you must leave it to me."

"Very well, sir. Do you think I have any chance?"

"I will do the best I can for you."

Decatur answered the challenge, selecting pistols as the weapons and four yards as the distance.

"You will stand face to face at four yards, and the word to be given, 'Take aim,' and to fire at the word 'Fire.'"

The challenger's second objected and proposed ten paces.

"This looks like murder, sir," he said to Decatur.

"No, sir; this looks like death, but not like murder. Your friend is a professed duelist; mine is wholly inexperienced. I am no duelist, but I am acquainted with the use of the pistol. If you insist on ten paces, I will fight your friend at that distance."

"We have no quarrel with you, sir," the Englishman replied.

"I will accept no other terms, unless you allow me to take the place of Mr. Bainbridge."

As the Englishman was afraid to allow the exchange, the terms were agreed upon and the two met on that footing.

Decatur gave the word, "Take aim," and kept their pistols extended until he was ready to order the shots.

"Fire!"

Bainbridge's ball passed through the Englishman's hat; the Englishman, sure of his man at ten paces, was phazed at the short distance, and missed Bainbridge entirely.

"You must fire lower or you will be killed," whispered Decatur to Midshipman Bainbridge.

The English officer refused to make an apology, and so another shot was ordered.

The two men were again placed face to face, and the word was given as before.

Bainbridge fired lower, and his ball entered the Englishman's brain, killing him instantly.

Honor was satisfied.

The code was upheld.

Bainbridge had only done what the entire civilized world, at that time, insisted was the right thing to do.

Not only did custom render it his duty to fight, but the military laws rendered it obligatory.

Although everything had been regular, the Governor of Malta sent a demand that Decatur and Bainbridge should be surrendered to him to be tried in the civil courts for an infraction of the laws.

The captain of the *New York* refused to acknowledge Sir Alexander Ball in the matter at all, and the commodore indorsed the action of the captain.

But later it was thought advisable to remove the officers from all chance of being captured by the English at Malta, and they were ordered back to the United States in the *Chesapeake*, which was returning.

Capt. James Barron commanded the *Chesapeake*, and carried sealed letters to the government concerning the young officers, who were returned as passengers.

They were tried by court martial, and, of course, acquitted.

Decatur felt that no guilt rested on him, and the verdict of the court was a vindication.

But many Tories thought that he was but little better than a murderer, and openly accused the government of shielding a criminal.

Feeling ran high. The fair-minded men of both nationalities admitted that he acted rightly; only the hot-headed Tories appeared to think him wrong.

Private warnings were conveyed to him that his life might be in danger, but he laughed at such hints, and went about his business as though he had never heard them.

His mother begged him to be careful, and he promised he would, but that very evening he was passing through a narrow street, when a man jumped out of an alley way, and with a muttered curse, struck him with some heavy weapon, knocking him senseless.

"You rebel," the man hissed between his teeth, "I'll take care you never kill another Englishman."

CHAPTER XVI.

"YANKEE TARS CAN LAUGH AT DANGERS."

We are not fatalists, but we believe that our lives are shaped by some great power so that all things come right, and we are enabled to work out our destiny.

Decatur was at the mercy of the Tory who had threatened his life. In all human probability Stephen Decatur would never have lived to become the terror of the seas had not some higher power watched over his destinies and saved him for his great work.

The young officer lay on the ground absolutely unconscious, and standing over him was the Tory, who sought to avenge the death of the young Englishman at Malta.

The man raised his weapon and was about to deliver another blow, which would have ended Decatur's career, but his arm was arrested, not by any human being, but solely through a thought which passed across his mind. That thought was one based on gain rather than revenge, though it savored of both.

England was still seizing Americans and making them do duty on war ships. The English paid bounties on all men delivered on board, and as the two nations were at peace, a great deal of kidnaping was possible.

The would-be assassin thought that he could save his neck, have his revenge, and make money by delivering Decatur up to the English ship which was lying in the offing. For a second time Decatur was in danger of being "pressed."

The man hesitated for a few moments, thinking how best to get the young officer away without attracting attention.

The poet says: "He who hesitates is lost," and in this case the poet was right, for Decatur slowly recov-

ered his senses, and, opening his eyes, saw the man bending over him with the murderous weapon in his hand. There was no time for consideration. Quickly and with silence Decatur crawled two steps, and with a sudden movement of his hands caught the fellow by the legs and pulled him down.

The Tory, unprepared for such an act, fell heavily, his head coming in contact with a large stone.

A stream of blood gushed up from his neck, but for once Decatur did not wait to see whether the man was seriously hurt, but deeming discretion the better part of valor, he rose to his feet and stepped at a lively pace away from the scene.

The Tory was not killed, but he had received such a severe contusion that his life was despaired of for some time, and only with the best of skill and the careful nursing by some good women in the hospital to which he was taken was his life saved.

As Decatur went on his way home his feelings were not of the brightest. He was rather low-spirited, for he had not achieved as much as he had wished.

He was determined to go to sea again, even if he had to enlist as a seaman before the mast.

"It is strange how many times I have met with dangers which reflect no glory," he mused, as he walked along the dark streets.

He heard footsteps and was almost nervous, until he heard the owner of the feet singing in a low tone to himself.

"That is a good sign," mused Decatur, "a bad man would not sing."

The men got nearer to each other, and Decatur heard the words of a new song, a song which had been dedicated to his father.

"Yankee tars can laugh at dangers,
While the roaring mountain waves
Teems with carnage—they are strangers
To a deed that is not brave."

“I ought to know that voice,” exclaimed Decatur, aloud.

“Ha, ha, ha! If you do not know the voice of the singer, I know that of Capt. Dick.”

“Is that you, Hamilton?”

“Of course it is, and right glad I am to meet you. It is too pestiferous dark to see you.”

“Where are you going, Hamilton?”

“How long have I been called Hamilton by Capt. Dick?”

“Well, Mopsy, if that will please you better.”

“I should say it would. Why, old fellow, it makes me feel good. It calls back the time when we used to steal forth from old Abercrombie’s and sneak into the Quaker burial ground to get you to lead us into some rattling, roaring fun. You were a glorious fellow, Capt. Dick, and as your friends would say, ‘shiver my timbers,’ you are just as good now.”

“What news, Mopsy, have you that makes you so jolly to-night?”

“Jolly, am I? Well, I confess I have had a bottle more than is usual, and you know that when the wine flows through a man’s veins he feels——”

“Sleepy; at least I do. Wine may be all right in its way, Mopsy, but I think a clear head is better.”

“Right you are, and you will need one, for I have just heard that you are to go back to the Mediterranean in a short time.”

“Where did you hear that news?”

“That’s telling, my boy. I never tell tales out of school, and if the secretary of the navy should call me his friend, and whisper that a certain young man is a great favorite, even if he did show how to kill an Englishman, I am not going to tell all I hear.”

“But is it true that I am to join my ship again? I hope it is, for I feel like a fish out of water on land.”

“Of course you do, for——” and Hamilton began to sing:

"How happy is the sailor's life,
From coast to coast to roam;
He loves to range, he's nowhere strange;
He ne'er will turn his back
To friend or foe; no, masters, no;
My life for honest Jack.

"If saucy foes dare make a noise,
And to the sword appeal;
We out and quickly larn 'em, boys,
With whom they have to deal.
We know no craft, but 'fore and aft
Lay on our strokes again;
Then, if they're stout, for 'tother bout,
We drub 'em o'er again."

"I never knew you could sing so well, Mopsy. You must be in a good humor."

"I should say so. Now, then, shout out the chorus with me:

"Then, if they're stout, for 'tother bout——"

"Past ten o'clock! Gentlemen, it is time for good people to be in bed."

"The watch! The watch! Pray tell me, watchman, is it going to rain before the morrow?"

"It is Master Hamilton. I know the voice without letting the light from my good horn lantern shine upon his face."

"You can trust my voice better than your old smoky lantern, good master watch."

"Don't you revile my lantern, for it showed me a man lying on the road with his head well-nigh beaten in——"

"Murder?"

"No, he had drunk too much, and had fallen with his head on a stone. Good-night, young gentlemen."

"I am offended, watch, for you have all your news for Mr. Hamilton, and not a word for me."

"Why, is it Stephen Decatur, the son of the bravest

man that ever trod a deck? And my eyes were so poor that they did not see him. Come, masters, it is time to reach home, for I beshrew me that you have taken that which maketh the heart merry. Past ten o'clock.”

The watchman still walked the streets of the Quaker City, and called out the hours of the night, and the good people of that city were sure that as long as time lasted the watchman would parade the streets with his horn lantern, even as he had done since the rare old William Penn had founded the City of Brotherly Love.

Hamilton and Decatur had about reached the latter's house when Stephen again asked if it were true that he was to join his ship.

“I heard it, and though I never tell what I hear, I am glad that you have won the right to be called captain.”

Not another word would Hamilton say, but Decatur never knew how he got upstairs that night, for he seemed to float in the air, his spirits were so light and joyous.

In the morning he received a summons to report at the office of the naval commandant in the city, and he then received confirmation of what Hamilton had told him the night before.

He was to have temporary command of the new brig *Argus*, sixteen guns, which he was to take to the Mediterranean and transfer to Lieut. Isaac Hull, his senior officer, whom he was to succeed in the command of the *Enterprise*.

He reached Gibraltar on the first of November and was joined there in a few days by the *Constitution*, Commodore Preble, and the *Enterprise*.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LOSS OF THE "PHILADELPHIA."

While Decatur was on the water taking the *Argus* to Gibraltar, the United States navy was undergoing a great loss before Tripoli.

The city of Tripoli was well walled and ably protected. As the sun shone on its white walls, its gilded domes and minarets, its mosques and palaces, the sight was one that would linger in the mind for years.

The bashaw was furious with all who were under his command because so many victories had been won by the navy of the United States.

The frigate *Philadelphia* was most dreaded of all the war ships which comprised our fleet. Capt. Bainbridge was known to be a brave, determined man, and his officers and crew were of the same caliber.

Commodore Preble had made the Emperor of Morocco pay a large indemnity for some depredations on our commerce, and he was to carry on the war with vigor. No wonder that the bashaw was irritated.

A well-armed Tripolitan schooner had made itself obnoxious to the Americans by firing and then sailing away, and repeating these tactics so often that Bainbridge determined to follow the schooner, though his frigate was much slower.

The Tripolitan had counted on just such action and entered the harbor, hoping to draw the *Philadelphia* within gunshot of the forts. Seeing that Bainbridge was not going to be caught in a trap like that, the schooner again came out of the harbor and proceeded to sail along the coast.

The *Philadelphia* put on all sail and followed. But the coast was treacherous; it abounded in shoals which,

known to the Tripolitans, were not marked on any chart.

Crowding on all sail, Bainbridge followed the saucy schooner, taking soundings all the time. The *Philadelphia* was making eight knots an hour when the sonorous voice of the man at the lead called out:

"Eight fathoms!"

The *Philadelphia* was safe with that water beneath her.

"Seven fathoms!"

The men began to feel that a slower speed would be safer.

"Six—half!" sang out the man, and at once Bainbridge cried out:

"Helm hard-a-port!"

Orders were given to brace the yards, and bring up the ship to the wind.

It was too late. A harsh grating sound was heard, and the next minute the bow shot up five or six feet out of the water, with such force that the masts were nearly wrenched out of the frigate.

"We are lost," cried the men, and at once a panic set in.

Men rushed to the davits, and were about to lower the boats; others were making ready to jump overboard when the drum taps called them to duty.

They forgot their fear. They forgot that they were in danger of losing their lives should they be taken captives; they remembered only that they were Americans, and that their country demanded that every man should do his duty.

The sails were set back, the anchors thrown overboard, the guns run aft, hoping by that means to force the frigate off the rock and into deep water.

The trap laid by the Tripolitan schooner had been successful.

Nine gunboats left Tripoli to attack the rock-bound frigate. They opened a raking fire on her, and Bain-

bridge answered by a quarter-deck cannonade, but the ship careened so that the guns were useless.

It was impossible to float the *Philadelphia*, and equally impossible to offer resistance. If the struggle was continued it meant the loss of many lives without any compensating result.

Bainbridge called the men on deck, and in a voice tremulous with emotion, said:

"Men, we must surrender. We have no chance, or I would not give in. If I thought that by sacrificing my life and your lives I could do any good for the cause of our country I should not hesitate; by all that I hold sacred I should consider myself justified, but there is no chance to save the ship, or to benefit our cause. I am about to order the flag lowered. It grieves me to do so, but——"

He could not continue, for the tears bedimmed his eyes, and he was almost choked with the deep emotion he felt. Not a man but was weeping, not a man but would rather have received his death wound than see the Stars and Stripes lowered, but all had to accept the inevitable.

The quartermaster went forward to lower the flag, but his hands trembled, and his eyes were so full of tears that he could not loosen the halliards.

"I cannot do it, sir. I never thought as how I should be asked to lower the flag."

"I will do it myself, quartermaster, though it is like stabbing me in the heart."

And so it came to pass that gallant Capt. Bainbridge lowered the flag on the *Philadelphia* amid the cries and sobs of brave men. The enemy saw the flag go down, and a shout of almost infernal joy went up from all.

"*Allah il Allah!*" they shouted, though the name of the Diety seemed like blasphemy when uttered by bloodthirsty pirates and marauders.

In a few minutes the Turks, in the service of Tripoli,

were on board, and began a scene of plunder which placed them outside the pale of civilization.

Not content with taking the officers' swords, they stripped off the epaulets, took the watches, trinkets, clothing and even shoes from the officers of the *Philadelphia*.

Then some of the scoundrels demanded that the officers turn their pockets inside out, so that any money which they might have secreted would fall on the deck. Capt. Bainbridge managed to retain a small locket containing the portrait of his loved wife.

It is only fair to say that when the captives reached Tripoli they had their personal pocket money restored, and were placed in a large house, where they were treated with the greatest consideration.

The bashaw sent for Capt. Bainbridge after a week's detention. He expected to find the American ready to accept any terms by which he could obtain liberty for himself and crew.

"Capt. Bainbridge, I have sent for you because I wished to see so brave a man," the bashaw said, most graciously, when the American entered his presence.

Bainbridge merely bowed.

"You have been treated as a brave man who is a prisoner of war should be treated. Have you anything of which you wish to complain?"

"Nothing."

"You have seen our power. You have seen how the prophet hath given us the key to the Mediterranean, and must know that we have a right to demand a tribute from those nations using the sea for commerce."

The bashaw waited and expected an answer, but the American was silent.

"Will you order your nation to submit and conclude with us a peace?"

"I have no power to order," answered Bainbridge,

"and I could not ask my nation to acknowledge that it should pay tribute to you."

"That is your reply?"

"It is."

"Then you shall be treated like any other dog of a Christian, and not like a brave man."

Orders were given for the incarceration of Bainbridge and all the officers and crew of the *Philadelphia* in a most loathsome dungeon.

They were huddled together worse than cattle, and less care was taken of them.

Once Bainbridge asked permission to write a letter to Commodore Preble, who was at Malta, and acquaint him with the loss of the *Philadelphia*.

There was a chance of sending the letter, and the bashaw, hoping that the harsh treatment had bent the proud spirit of the American, gave consent.

Bainbridge wrote his report, and in such a manner that he conveyed to Preble the strength of the defenses of Tripoli, but apparently so favorable to Tripoli that the bashaw was delighted, and restored the officers to their more pleasant quarters.

But the bashaw did not know that between the lines Bainbridge had written a letter in lemon juice, asking Preble to organize a movement to destroy the *Philadelphia*, so that she could not be used in the enemy's navy.

When Preble received the letter he noticed that the lines were very wide apart, and at once surmised that there was a motive.

He held the paper to the fire, and gradually the writing became visible, and he saw that Bainbridge was still a sterling patriot.

"Destroy the *Philadelphia*! Ay! you are right, Bainbridge; it shall not remain in the hands of the enemy if I can help it."

Preble was so elated that he had to call his officers together and tell them of the wonderful letter he had received from his coadjutor, Capt. Bainbridge.

"If we cannot recapture the frigate, better have her destroyed."

"Yes, but who will do it? It means death to whoever undertakes the work."

Such was the glorious patriotism of the officers of that ship that every man at once volunteered to take the lead in the work.

"We will go to Syracuse and mature our plans."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"WE ARE LOST."

Decatur, now actually captain of the *Enterprise*, was more vigilant than ever. There was a daring about him very much like that possessed by Paul Jones.

He loved to tantalize the enemy, even if he could not bear down upon the ships and capture them. McDonough, the best midddy that ever entered the steerage of a man-of-war, called out that a sail was visible, and that it looked like the enemy.

Decatur was on deck in the twinkling of an eye, and discerned that McDonough was right.

"It is a small vessel, sir."

"Ay, ay, McDonough, it is a ketch; we will have it, for it will be useful to us."

The first lieutenant hinted that the ketch was sailing under the protection of the guns in the harbor.

"So much the better, sir; we will snatch her from the very teeth of the enemy."

Sail was crowded on, and the *Enterprise* quickly overhauled the ketch, which proved to be the *Mastico*, bound for Constantinople with female slaves for the sultan.

"Signal her," ordered Decatur.

"She is defiant, sir. She hoists the Tripolitan colors; shall we hoist Spanish colors?"

"No. Up with the Stars and Stripes. We will fight openly and let the best win."

The *Mastico* carried two guns, and one was fired across the bow of the *Enterprise*.

"Does she think she can fight us?" asked the first lieutenant.

"No, but it will draw on us a fire from the long guns in the harbor; we must get away from land."

The fight was short. The tactics of the *Enterprise* were such that not once was the ship within reach of the harbor defense guns, and often the *Mastico* was between the harbor and the *Enterprise*.

After a few shots the Tripolitan flag was hauled down, and a boat was sent from the *Enterprise*, with Midshipman McDonough in command, to receive the formal surrender.

Returning toward Syracuse, Decatur saw the *Philadelphia* lying in the harbor protected by the heavy guns, and flying the enemy's colors.

His blood boiled as he saw the humiliation of his father's ship.

"We must rescue that frigate or destroy her," he said, at the mess table that day.

"We should require a stronger fleet than we have to do either, for Tripoli is so well defended that it is impregnable."

"Do you know the strength of the enemy in the harbor?"

"Yes, captain. Tripoli is well defended by walls and judiciously constructed batteries, having one hundred and fifteen heavy guns and manned by twenty-five thousand Arabs and Turks."

"Spoken like a book, good lieutenant, but what about the harbor?"

"There are nineteen gunboats with ten guns each, two schooners and two galleys eight guns each, and then the *Philadelphia* has all her guns mounted and double-shotted, and manned by Turks and Tripolitans."

"How know you this, lieutenant?"

"On the ketch there was a pilot, who pleaded so hard that we should shoot him that I thought the fellow had a history. I questioned him and found that he hated the Tripolitans, and had tried to desert. He was a pressed man, so I promised him his liberty under our flag if he would help us."

"And he promised?"

"He did more, for he had a private plan of the harbor showing all the shoals and quicksands, which, had the *Philadelphia* possessed, she would have been saved."

"His name?"

"Salvatore Catalone."

"An Italian?"

"A Corsican, and a hater of Tripoli."

"Good. I will see him; perhaps he can tell us how to rescue the frigate."

But the conversation was not to take place just then, for there was such a shouting and cheering on deck that Decatur commissioned Lieut. Lawrence to go on deck and find out what had caused the unusual commotion.

In a few minutes he returned, his face glowing with pleasure.

"The flagship!" he gasped. "The *Constitution*!"

"Where?"

"Within gunshot."

There was no attempt to maintain strict discipline, for each sought the deck in the quickest possible manner, and a loud shout went up from officers and men as they hailed the flagship of the Mediterranean squadron.

"Is it true?" asked Commodore Preble as Decatur mentioned the *Philadelphia*.

"Yes, and if you will give me permission I will destroy her and so prevent her becoming an enemy's ship."

Preble told Decatur of the letter he had received from Capt. Bainbridge, and both officers felt their hearts rise in their throats as they thought of his patriotic devotion.

Even while they were talking on the deck of the *Constitution*, a sail was sighted, and it was soon learned that it was the *Siren*, Lieut. Stewart, and again

the men on board the two American ships cheered as though they were within sight of land.

The commodore hailed the *Siren*, and very soon Stewart was on board. After saluting his superior officers he clasped Decatur's hand and congratulated him on his escape.

"Escape?" repeated Decatur.

"Yes. I heard in Syracuse that you had been run down by a Tripolitan frigate and the *Enterprise* captured and all the men on board killed."

"Yonder lies the *Enterprise*, and here stands its chief officer, so the news was false."

"I am glad to hear it, for there is not a man in all the navy I would so hate to lose as my old friend, Capt. Dick."

Preble told of the plight of the *Philadelphia*, and of the proposal to destroy her, whereupon Stewart volunteered, but the commodore shook his head and said he had promised that the work should be done by Decatur.

"Not jealous, are you, Stewart?"

"No, Decatur, I only honor you for having the chance. Your name, if you succeed, will be immortal."

"And if I fail I shall not live to know what the people say about me, but you know the *Philadelphia* was built for my father, and I ought to have a say in the matter."

The severe gales of a Mediterranean winter condemned the squadron to an irksome inactivity for several weeks in Syracuse.

Hundreds of years before that date there could have been no more pleasing prospect than a few weeks at such a place, for the city then had its quarter of a million inhabitants, and was the scene of great luxury and lavish entertainment. It was then the most beautiful of Grecian cities, but when Decatur was storm-bound there the sixteen thousand wretched inhabitants were

almost starving, and were driven to crime to obtain food.

The few well-to-do citizens entertained our fleet with true hospitality, but many a time the officers had to fight their way back to their ships for liberty and life.

On one occasion Decatur and his favorite midshipman, McDonough, were passing in the night through the streets to reach their boat and return to the *Enterprise*, when they were attacked by three armed ruffians.

They drew their swords, and placing their backs to a wall, defended themselves so stoutly that they succeeded in wounding two of their assailants.

The three tried to escape, but one of them being pursued by McDonough into a house, got upon the roof, and being nearly overtaken, precipitated himself to the ground and perished before he was reached.

When the man's body was searched it was found that he was not a citizen of Syracuse, but a Tripolitan who had been hired by the degraded and defeated Mahomet Rais to kill Decatur or any other officer of the United States Navy.

Daily consultations took place on the *Constitution*, that stanch craft of which the English learned so much in later years, brave "Old Ironsides," and a plan was completed for the destruction of the *Philadelphia*.

Decatur was to have complete charge, and Stewart, with the *Siren*, was to cover the retreat when the work was done.

The *Mastico*, being a boat which the people were in the habit of seeing in those waters, was to be used to transport Decatur's men, each of whom was to be disguised as a Maltese sailor.

"We must rename the *Mastico*," said Decatur; "what name would you suggest, Stewart?"

"I think you have the right to name it, and whatever you suggest is sure to be right."

"I had thought of the *Intrepid*."

"Bravo! No name could be better."

And from that day the captured ketch was no longer a Tripolitan vessel bearing the fantastic name of the *Mastico*, but a United States boat named the *Intrepid*.

Decatur, with that modesty which characterized him, asked that six officers from the *Constitution* should join six from the *Enterprise*, while the sixty-two men should be from the *Enterprise*.

This was agreed upon by Preble, and Decatur asked that the commodore should select the men.

"No, sir. You have a right to select your own companions. Remember that very few of you will return alive. The work is one of the most dangerous that was ever attempted. Select those you think best suited."

"May I call for volunteers?"

"If you desire. You are unfettered."

All the officers were mustered on deck, and the commodore told them that Decatur desired to have six of them with him in his dangerous mission.

"Men, fellow officers, the work I am about to engage in is one of the most dangerous that can well be imagined. For that reason I call for volunteers. Only the strongest of you, only those who are willing to lose his life in defense of his country's honor, only those who are prepared to die within twenty-four hours should respond."

Decatur's speech might have been more eloquent, but it stirred the hearts of the officers, and every man of them volunteered.

"I only require six of the young officers."

Not a man withdrew.

"I cannot take all, so unless some of you withdraw I shall have to make a selection."

It was useless making any more appeals, for every man on the stanch Old Ironsides wanted the honor of serving under Decatur in that expedition.

After a few minutes' conversation with the commo-

dore Decatur began to read off the names of those he had selected.

"Midshipman Ralph Izard."

There was a rousing cheer as the young officer stepped forward.

"John Rowe, Alexander Laws, Charles Morris, John Davis."

To prevent an expression of approval after each name Decatur had read the last four quickly, and only when the last name was mentioned did the others send up a rousing, rattling cheer.

From the *Enterprise* he selected all three of his lieutenants, James Lawrence, Joseph Bainbridge and Jonathan Thorn, and the surgeon, Lewis Herrmann, with his favorite midshipman, Thomas McDonough.

The *Intrepid* had been provisioned for a cruise of thirty-five days, full allowance of food and water for seventy-five men. That same evening the two ships, the *Siren* and *Intrepid*, set sail for Tripoli.

The voyage was pleasant, and the men were excited with the thought of what they would do for their country when Tripoli was reached. But, alas! the promised land was in sight, everything seemed favorable, when a sudden gale blew up and the *Intrepid* had to put out again to sea, or go to the bottom.

Lieut. Stewart feared that the *Intrepid*, so heavily laden as it was, would not be able to weather the storm. He ordered a boat to be lowered to send assistance to the gallant little craft, but scarcely had it touched the water when it was dashed to a thousand pieces.

"We can render no aid," said Stewart, sadly.

"We may not live through the gale ourselves," said the quartermaster.

Stewart and several of his crew were swept off their feet, bowled over like tenpins by the capstan running away with the bars, and in its wild, whirling round

dealing bruises and broken limbs to those who were within reach.

Stewart was badly bruised, but he bore it manfully and signaled to Decatur.

"Can you hold out?" he shouted through the speaking horn.

"For God and country I will try," came back the answer.

A giant wave dashed over the *Siren* and swept a seaman off the deck, and as the wave broke over the *Intrepid* a cry went up from the men on board:

"We are lost! We are lost, and we shall not destroy the *Philadelphia*."

CHAPTER XIX.

A DESPERATE EXPEDITION.

Try to imagine the discomfort of those seventy-five brave men on board the *Intrepid*.

The ketch was only of thirty tons burden, and had no accommodations for more than a very small crew.

Decatur and the four officers occupied the small cabin, and only two out of the five could lie down at one time; the six midshipmen and the pilot had a platform laid on the water casks, which they completely covered when they laid down to sleep. When they sat up their heads reached the deck; the marines had corresponding accommodations on the opposite side, while the sailors had only the casks in the hold.

The sea was boiling. Giant waves dashed and broke on the deck, threatening the life of the *Intrepid* every minute. The craft was a stanch one, or it could not have lived through that first day, but when night came, and the fury of the gale grew in intensity, not one on board expected to live until morning.

The *Siren* was driven out of sight, and the *Intrepid* was alone at the mercy of the waves.

A calamity which made the stoutest heart feel heavy overtook them during the night. The meat had been stored so that the best quarters could be retained for the combustibles necessary for the destruction of the *Philadelphia*. A fierce wave burst open the provision barrels, and every bit of meat was destroyed.

The second day was even worse than the first, and Decatur began to lose hope. Had he only an ordinary crew to look after it would have been different, but having seventy more than the *Intrepid* was built to accommodate comfortably, the task became unpleasantly irksome and dangerous.

For six days this state of things continued, and for all that time the men had to subsist on half rations of bread and water, no other food being obtainable in the gale.

While every man on board expected death during that storm, there was not one that feared it, their only anxiety and thought being that their mission would be unaccomplished.

It was not individual, but rather patriotic fear that each experienced.

As suddenly as the storm arose it abated, and a giant and powerful wave broke over the deck, succeeded by a calm almost supernatural in its serenity.

Those who have passed through the Bay of Biscay in a storm and then into the strange calm of the water beyond, can better understand the feelings of those on board the *Intrepid*.

When the calm enabled the men to stretch their legs on deck without endangering the ketch, Decatur took the opportunity to drill every man in his duty, and to rehearse, as it were, the part each was to play in the work before him.

So carefully had the young leader mapped out the work that no well-acted tragedy on a stage could be more perfect.

Decatur, with Midshipmen Izard and Rowe and fifteen men were to take charge of the upper deck of the *Philadelphia*; Lieut. Lawrence, with Middies Laws and McDonough, were to fire berth-deck and forward storeroom; Midshipmen Joseph Bainbridge and John Davis, with ten men, were to look after the wardroom and steerage; Midshipman Morris and eight men were to fire cockpit and aft storeroom, while Midshipman Thorn, the gunner and surgeon were to remain on the *Intrepid*.

To make sure that no one escaped from the *Philadelphia*, Midshipman Anderson was to man cutter, pick

up all boats and prevent any of the enemy swimming ashore.

Such was the plan, which to make our historical story most accurate, we have reproduced from the official records.

It was on the afternoon of the sixteenth of February that Decatur came again in sight of Tripoli.

Then the young commander called all his men together and addressed them.

"You know the dangers you will have to encounter. Let no man think of his life, that is of secondary importance. We must succeed. Let no gun be fired, for that would be the signal for our destruction, and, worst of all, our failure. Make no noise. Let everything be done orderly. We have a great force against us. If we were not patriots, we should never dare face the odds; as it is we will win. For our country we will triumph."

Decatur was right. The odds were very great. The *Philadelphia* had forty guns mounted, double-shotted and ready for firing. She was moored within half a gunshot of the bashaw's castle and the Molehead and Crown batteries, and within effective range of ten other batteries, mounting one hundred and fifteen guns of heavy caliber. And in addition to all this force there were the gunboats and cruisers with their guns all ready for use.

Nearer and nearer the little ketch got to the great frigate, which looked more formidable than ever. Her numerous well-lighted ports looked like so many threatening eyes, each portending death to the daring Yankees.

"Conceal yourselves!"

Only eight men, disguised as Maltese sailors, were to be in sight when the *Intrepid* reached the *Philadelphia*.

A little before half-past nine the *Intrepid* was within two hundred yards of the *Philadelphia*, which, tending

to the northeast breeze, lay with her head nearly seaward.

Turning to the quartermaster at the wheel, Decatur ordered him to steer so as to run under the bows, as he wished to board over the forecastle.

"Ay, ay, sir," grimly responded the quartermaster.

A light land breeze from the southeast taking the *Intrepid* back and canting the *Philadelphia*, by whose bulk the little ketch was becalmed, brought the two vessels together parallel to each other at a distance of not more than twenty yards.

Decatur was hailed from the *Philadelphia* and ordered to keep off.

The pilot, Catalano, replied that the boat was from Malta, and had lost its anchors in the late gale off Cape Mesurado, and asked to be permitted to run a warp to the frigate, and ride by her until anchors could be obtained from Tripoli.

Instead of giving permission the captain asked the name of the brig in the offing.

The *Siren*, which was to have kept out of sight, had been seen. The pilot, with ready wit and knowledge of the situation, replied:

"The *Transfer*, from Malta."

"Allah be praised!"

The *Transfer*, a former British war ship, had been purchased by the Tripolitans, and was daily expected.

While the conversation had been going on the quartermaster had run the *Intrepid* right under the bows of the *Philadelphia*.

"Sheer off," shouted the captain of the *Philadelphia*, in good Arabic. "If you must make fast I will send you a rope, and you can secure your boat to the stern."

"All right," answered the pilot, but in a low voice he ordered the boat to push off and make fast to the bow chains.

A boat was pushed off from the *Philadelphia*, and a rope was passed up to the *Intrepid*.

The *Intrepid* was also made fast to one of the ring bolts of the fore chains.

Three of the crew, dressed as Maltese sailors, began to haul at the rope, and the *Intrepid* was drawn gradually to the side of the frigate.

One of the crew of the boat which had brought the rope from the frigate caught a glimpse of Decatur's face, and he recognized it, for he had been on the ketch when it was captured, and had swam to shore.

He did not wait to reach the deck of the *Philadelphia*, but shouted:

"*Americanos!*"

It was repeated on the ship, and every sailor on the *Philadelphia* was terrified.

The order was given to draw the tompions from the guns in readiness to fire, and Decatur knew that the engagement might be a sanguinary one.

But he was cool. He gave his orders as calmly as though he was on peaceful errand bent.

Every word he uttered was heard and understood by those in hiding as well as the men in disguise.

The two vessels came in contact, and then the hour for action arrived.

Decatur sprang at the main chains of the *Philadelphia*, and waving his hand to his men on the *Intrepid* he gave the order, in a clear voice:

"Board!"

Midshipman Morris, of the *Siren*, lithe and agile as a monkey, leaped past Decatur and was on deck first.

Laws made a dash at a porthole, but his boarding belt got caught between the gun and the port, and he was third on deck instead of, as he hoped, first.

Quickly, in succession, as fast as they could find space to ascend through the gangways, the ports and over the rail, all the officers and crew, to the number of sixty, were on board the *Philadelphia*.

While they were mustering on the quarter-deck, the

enemy had become aroused and collected in a confused mass on the forecastle and in the gangways.

Decatur waited in silence until his followers had collected round him, when, forming a front with his men across the deck, and placing himself at their head, he rushed, sword in hand, upon the enemy.

Caught between an advancing body of resolute Americans and the ship rail, those who were not cut down, after a short, desperate resistance, leaped overboard.

Not a shot was fired, but the hand-to-hand fighting was terrible. The Tripolitans, Turks and Arabs fell cut in two by the heavy sword slashes of the determined Americans.

In five minutes the spar deck was cleared and in possession of Decatur.

Below there was a more determined struggle. The enemy, with their backs to the ship's side, made a savage and fierce resistance, but were overmatched from the beginning.

The Tripolitans made a practice of never falling into the hands of an enemy, and those who were not cut down ran to the ports and jumped overboard.

Within ten minutes of the time Morris leaped on deck closely followed by Decatur, there was not a Tripolitan on board save the dead and wounded.

Lawrence stood beside his commander, and in a low voice said:

"We have done well, now let us fire the frigate before the batteries open on us."

"Have they seen us?"

"Not yet, or if they have they are afraid to fire, for fear that they may destroy their own men."

"I would like to search for papers first; do you think it would be safe?"

"No, a few moments delay is dangerous now."

"Please, captain, I would like to cut the frigate free and fire her so that the enemy might be burned up."

It was the youngest midddy who spoke, and Decatur smiled at the youthful zeal.

"We should all be destroyed as well."

"Please, captain, that would not matter if we could destroy the enemy at the same time."

"It is impossible."

Decatur ordered the powder on the *Intrepid* to be transferred to the frigate, and the men began rapidly hoisting the kegs of powder over the side and carrying them along the deck.

In a few minutes, so well did the men work, the gun room, the magazine scuttle, the cockpit and the forward storerooms were well filled with combustibles.

Like a well-regulated machine, the men detailed to fire the frigate performed the duty simultaneously, and so quickly that they were soon driven from below by the smoke and fumes of the conflagration.

"Back to the *Intrepid*," ordered Decatur.

"There is a wounded Turk; what shall we do with him?" asked Laws.

"Lower him to the ketch; we do not murder our enemies."

Decatur feared that more wounded men might be below, and through fire and smoke he rushed down the companion way to look for himself.

Dressed in the jacket of an Italian sailor, and with a Maltese sword in his hand, he was mistaken by Midshipman Morris for one of the enemy, and would have been cut down had he not quickly uttered the password:

"Philadelphia."

It was a lucky thought, for the place was so dark that neither could see the other; only by instinct did Decatur fancy that Morris was one of his own party.

CHAPTER XX.

"THE MOST BOLD AND DARING ACT OF THE AGE."

"Cut the fasts and shove off," ordered Decatur as soon as he was on board the *Intrepid*, and he was the last to leave the burning ship.

The necessity for speedy action was manifest, for the frigate had been fired close to the powder magazines, and on the *Intrepid* there were a number of barrels of highly inflammable oil, to be used in case an opportunity offered to burn other ships belonging to the enemy.

The men, calm in the midst of danger, breasted the *Intrepid* off with spars, and pressing on their sweeps, tried to move her from the vicinity of the burning ship.

In the hurry they had forgotten that the Turks had made the boat fast to the aft, as well as to the bow, and it seemed as though the brave men would perish at the moment when their work was finished.

Midshipman Morris lowered himself in the chain, and with his boarding knife hacked away at the hawser until the strain was enough to sever the rope.

Then the men bent to the sweeps, and the *Intrepid* was wafted beyond the reach of the flames.

Few grander sights could be imagined than was presented by the *Philadelphia*.

In awful grandeur the flames shot up and played along the well-oiled rigging; as the melted tar ran down the black sides of the vessel the flames caught it and gave the tar the appearance of great fiery serpents writhing in mortal agony; the flames outlined every mast and every rope, and as the heart of Decatur saddened to see the destruction of his father's ship, a heavy boom told that one of the cannons had been

fired, and had sent its shot through the bottom of the grand frigate.

The guns from the batteries began to play on the daring Americans, and many a shot fell sizzling and hissing in the water close to the *Intrepid*.

But though death was so near, the Americans were not afraid. The men rested on their sweeps, the flag was run up to the main yard, and Decatur led in the cheering which greeted its defiant floating on the air.

The Tripolitans fired again and again on the *Intrepid*, and then put off in boats to overtake and punish the daring Yankees.

While the Tripolitans mingled curses with cries of *Allah*, the men on the *Intrepid* were singing so loudly that their voices reached the ears of their enemies.

And the song they sang was one which the men on the *Bonhomme Richard* had sung so often when sailing under Paul Jones:

"A Yankee ship and a Yankee crew,
Tally hi ho, you know;
Freedom defends, and the land where it grew—
We're free, aloft and alow!
Bearing down is a foe in regal pride,
Defiance floating at each mast head;
One's a wreck, and she bears that floats alongside,
The Stars and Stripes, to victory wed.
For a Yankee ship and a Yankee crew,
Tally hi ho, you know,
Ne'er strikes to a foe while the sky is blue,
Or a tar's aloft or alow."

Then came three hearty American cheers, and the boats of the *Siren* having approached, helped to tow the *Intrepid* out of the harbor.

It was fifteen days later when the *Intrepid* and *Siren* reached Syracuse and received the congratulations of Commodore Preble.

Not a life had been lost, not one mishap had oc-

curred, and the heroism of the act will ever stand out boldly in the world's history of courageous deeds.

England's greatest admiral, Lord Nelson, was at the time blockading Toulon, having his flag on the *Victory*. When the news of Decatur's achievement reached him he rapturously declared it to be "the most bold and daring act of the age."

In his report to the home government Commodore Preble asked that Decatur should be promoted to the rank of post captain. "The important service he has rendered," wrote Preble, "of destroying an enemy's frigate of forty guns, and the gallant manner in which he performed it, in a vessel of only sixty tons and four guns under the enemy's batteries, surrounded by the corsairs and armed boats, the crews of which stood appalled at his intrepidity and daring, would, in any navy in Europe, insure him instantaneous promotion."

There was no jealousy. Stewart was as warm in Decatur's praises as the commodore, and the junior officers were so impressed with the courage of the young lieutenant that they used his name for years afterward as a synonym of great and exceptional bravery.

"I was with Decatur," was a password which admitted to the best society in the years which followed the destruction of the *Philadelphia*, and every participant was proud of his share in the gallant action.

Had the fleet been able to follow up the daring victory of Decatur, rapid success would have been certain, for the capture and burning of the *Philadelphia* almost paralyzed the Tripolitans, and even the bashaw was heard to declare that the elements fought for the Yankees.

But the elements fought against us, for the severe Mediterranean winter made it impossible for any active work to be undertaken against Tripoli.

While the fleet was anchored at Syracuse a second letter was received from the imprisoned Capt. Bainbridge, written in lemon juice.

Bainbridge congratulated the navy on the destruction of the *Philadelphia*.

"From our prison we saw the flames ascend to the shrouds and lap the vessel in an eternal embrace of fire," he wrote, "and I thanked Heaven that no more should the guns of my old ship be used against the land which sent her forth. It was a well planned and well executed piece of work, but I would like to whisper a word of warning to Decatur's ear. Let him be careful not to fall into the hands of the bashaw, for if he does he will be killed."

"Pleasant, certainly," responded Decatur, "but I have no desire to partake of the hospitality of the bashaw."

"I would like Bainbridge to have a full history of the expedition," said McDonough.

"Yes, but I fear it will be a long time before he hears the whole truth."

"Do you think the commodore will allow me to pay a flying visit to Tripoli and have a chat with Bainbridge?" McDonough asked, very quietly.

"It would be impossible!"

"No, Mr. Decatur, if I could get permission I would try it, and I think I should succeed and bring back information about the city as well as our comrades."

The idea was a wild one, and Decatur would not give permission for the commodore to be asked, but McDonough managed to get a leave of absence for a month, and his eyes glowed with joyous happiness as he left the *Enterprise*, after bidding all his friends farewell.

The daring young midshipman went on shore and disguised himself as a Grecian sailor. He roamed about the docks for several days, and then found the opportunity he wished. A small schooner was to sail

to Tripoli, with a cargo of fruit and several girls who were destined for the household of the bashaw.

McDonough had learned that the schooner was short-handed; he did not tell anyone at that time that he had bribed a sailor at the last minute to desert his post.

As a man before the mast, the young midshipman, the hero of Champlain, as he became later, sailed to Tripoli.

He learned that the girls were slaves, and that they were going very unwillingly, for they had heard that the bashaw was a very hard taskmaster.

McDonough wondered whether he could not liberate the girls, as well as fulfill the object of his visit, but he soon found that to do so would be detrimental to his success. The girls had to be left to their fate.

The daring middy obtained his discharge when the schooner reached Tripoli, and he at once set about finding the American prisoners.

For three days he sought in vain.

On the fourth day he tried a new part of the city, and loitered among the people gathered round the mosques, listening to their conversation and learning much from them of the opinion felt for the Yankees.

Several times he had difficulty in maintaining his disguise when he heard the expressions of contempt by some of the Tripolitans.

To conceal his feelings he walked away whistling an old air which was better known in Philadelphia than in Tripoli.

Right in front of a magnificent bazaar, where dark-eyed though veiled beauties stood gazing in rapture on the perfumes and knickknacks offered for sale, McDonough stopped.

Not only did he arrest his footsteps, but stopped whistling as well, for he heard an echo. At least he thought it was one, but when he stopped whistling the echo continued.

"I'll wager there isn't such a wonderful echo this side of the Shenandoah," said the midshipman to himself. "I wonder if the echo can sing as well as whistle, but I'm afraid to try that, for I am a Greek, so I'll whistle something else."

McDonough whistled another American air, one to which the sailors under Paul Jones had sung a song eulogistic of the American navy.

The whistle was repeated, and then a voice was heard singing to the same tune words something like this:

"If the whistler can take a hint let him whistle again."

McDonough whistled a few bars.

"If the whistler is an American, he will know that we are close by and are prisoners."

The midshipman looked all round and at last saw a square one-story building with narrow windows crossed by heavy bars.

That was enough. He did not whistle again, but lounged about, watching everyone who went near the building. At last his watching was rewarded, for he saw a man about to enter with a large pail of water.

"Let me take that pail in to the Americanos," he said, in fairly good Arabic.

"Why do you want to do that? I hate the prisoners and love to see them drink the nasty water."

"Let me see them once that I may laugh at them."

"Do you hate them?"

McDonough uttered something which the man took to be an assent, and as the midshipman gave him a pretty large Turkish coin in the form of backsheesh, the man gave up the pail and gave McDonough the password.

In three minutes McDonough was talking to Capt. Bainbridge and telling him all the news, and receiving from him messages for the commodore.

For three days McDonough visited the prisoners and talked over various plans for their release.

He might have stayed two or three more days, only one of the Turks seemed to suspect him and followed him very closely. It was only by appearing to insult the prisoners that the midshipman escaped detention.

Once more shipping as a man before the mast, he returned to Syracuse, where he told his wonderful story, and received the thanks and congratulations of the commodore and officers.

CHAPTER XXI.

"I WILL AVENGE HIM."

"By the beard of the prophet, if mine eyes do not deceive me, those accursed dogs of infidels, the Americanos, are going to attack us."

The bashaw had been watching the American navy from the battlements of his castle, and laughed heartily at the trap into which the Americans were falling, as he thought.

"Yonder dogs of infidels have no notion of fighting, they are a sort of Jews, who will mark their distance for tacking, that is all."

The courtiers agreed with the bashaw, and declared that if the Americans came too near they would all be captured, and a heavy ransom demanded.

It did look most foolhardy for Preble to attempt to fight the Tripolitans in their harbor, with so small a force at his command, for he had only one heavy frigate, the grand old *Constitution*, three brigs, three schooners, two bomb vessels and three gunboats, manned by one thousand and sixty, officers and men, while the bashaw was defended by a dozen powerful forts, a fleet strong and capable and manned by twenty-five thousand Turks and Arabs.

Late in July, 1804, Commodore Preble had made all his plans for the attack, and had called his officers together to discuss with them the details.

After mature deliberation he had determined on Decatur and Somers to lead the attack.

The larger vessels were to cover the advance of the gunboats, which were to do the real fighting, and these gunboats were to be in two divisions, the first under Decatur and the second under Somers.

None of the midshipmen from the *Constitution* were allowed to leave the frigate, much to their disgust and disappointment. Preble knew that while the gunboats would have to do all the fighting, the larger vessels would have to skillfully maneuver so that they could support the gunboats.

Somers looked into the clear eyes of Decatur and saw that there was a light of pleasure in them.

"Ours is a dangerous honor," said Somers.

"Ay, you say rightly, but I thank Heaven that we have been selected to uphold our country's flag in such a dangerous expedition."

"If I fall," whispered Somers, "I leave to you my memory. Let the folks at home know that I died for my country."

"If I fall and you survive, I beg leave the same task of you, but I think we may both fall, and then—McDonough will bear the news to our own land."

On the third of August, 1804, began that immortal series of attacks on the town, the fortresses and fleet of Tripoli which was destined to destroy that barbarous and piratical power.

And the glory, the honor, the renown must all center round the names of Stephen Decatur and Thomas Somers.

Decatur's division consisted of three gunboats, each armed with a single long twenty-four pounder; Somers had the same number of boats and guns, one boat in his division being under the command of James Decatur, Stephen's younger brother.

It was a bright and beautiful day, and the sun shone on the blue waters of the Mediterranean and on the white-walled city, with its circle of grim forts, its three smart cruisers lying under the guns of the castle, crowned with heavy mortars, and on its fleet of gunboats manned with quaintly garbed sailors.

It was just after two bells in the afternoon watch

that the *Constitution* ran in, with a good breeze, about three miles from the city. She wore ship with her head off the land, and signaled to the brigs, schooners, gunboats and bomb vessels to prepare for action, and at the same time the frigate was cleared for action.

In Decatur's boat was a young Philadelphian, Reuben James, who was so proud of his captain that several times he asked for permission to be close to him so that he might shield him if occasion arose.

Four bells had been rung when the gunboats and bombs were cast off, and in a few minutes the bombs, being within half a mile of the shore, began throwing shells into the city.

The enemy's shipping and batteries immediately opened a tremendous fire, which was received and returned by the gallant squadron as it gradually approached until within two cables' length of the rocks, and three cables' length, or less than a quarter of a mile, of a portion of the batteries, at which distance it continued to maneuver, covering the gunboats and battering the castles of the Tripolitans.

The enemy's gunboats, trusting to their threefold superiority of numbers, as well as superior size, abandoned their sheltered position behind the rocks and went out in two divisions to attack the Americans.

Decatur being more to windward than Somers, was able to bear down with sails and oars to attack the eastern division of the enemy, consisting of nine gunboats.

He ordered Lieuts. Bainbridge and Trippe, who commanded the other two boats of his division, to unship their bowsprits, as it was his intention to board.

Somers, being further to leeward, and having a slower boat, was unable by dint of rowing to reach the division of the enemy for which Decatur was steering; he therefore bore away to attack the leeward division, consisting of five boats.

Lieut. James Decatur, having a fast boat, departed from established order and brought his boat into his brother's line, which seemed likely to be soonest engaged with an overpowering force of the enemy.

The Tripolitans advanced boldly, keeping up a hot fire of grape and musketry, which Decatur returned with good interest.

The smoke from the guns and the batteries so beclouded the scene that the Tripolitans could not make out the exact position of the Americans, but suddenly a boat was laid alongside the first Tripolitan gunboat, and Decatur's voice was heard ringing out the order to board, and then the enemy knew the exact position of the Americans.

The boat of Lieut. Bainbridge, having her lateen yard shot away, dropped astern of her consorts.

Decatur was followed by his brother and by Trippe, and they each ran on board one of the enemy's boats.

The Tripolitans were noted for hand-to-hand fighting, and they thought they could drive the Americans into the sea, but they were mistaken, for the men obeying the orders of Decatur made a steady charge, and the boat was carried with the first rush.

The struggle had only lasted ten minutes, a struggle in which pistol and cutlass, and pike and battle-ax were used with terrible effect.

The Tripolitan colors were hauled down, and Decatur, taking his prize in tow, was proceeding out of the harbor, when the boat which had been commanded by his brother came under his stern, and Midshipman Thorn hailed his chief.

"We have had a loss," he said.

"What is it, Mr. Thorn?"

"Lieut. Decatur is wounded."

"Severely?"

"Yes. He had boarded a Turkish boat yonder, and the flag had been hauled down, when, as he advanced

across the deck, the captain drew a pistol and shot him. We carried him to his own boat. The Turk escaped and has sought refuge in the enemy's line."

"Poor James! I will avenge him, and his cowardly assassin shall answer to me. Blood for blood I will have, so help me Heaven!"

CHAPTER XXII.

THE AVENGING OF JAMES DECATUR.

James Decatur had not fallen while fighting, but had been murdered in cold blood, in a most treacherous manner.

He had boarded one of the gunboats and had fought so well that the Turkish commander ordered the Tripolitan flag hauled down and offered his sword to the young lieutenant in token of surrender.

With a true magnanimity he refused the sword and allowed the Turk to keep his weapons.

Orders were given to disarm the men on the gunboat, when, Decatur's back being turned, the commander drew his pistol and shot the young man through the head.

A panic ensued, and the Tripolitans again took possession of their boat.

Such treachery deserved condign punishment, and Capt. Decatur felt that he must administer it before he went to his brother's boat.

The Americans bent to their sweeps and unshipped their bowsprit and were soon alongside the Mussulman craft.

Decatur had put his pistol in his pocket and had taken a boarding spike in his hand to parry the Tripolitan scimiters.

As the boats came together it was easy to recognize the captain, a man of most ferocious countenance and gigantic frame.

Reuben James stood by the side of Decatur and threw a grappling iron with exactitude aboard the enemy's boat, and the Americans dragging on the chain drew the boat toward them.

There was no necessity to call for boarders. Every man sought the honor of being with their loved chief at such a moment.

All who could be spared sprang on board, and then began the most desperate hand-to-hand fight of the whole war.

The Turkish captain saw the fire flash in Decatur's eye and stepped back, hoping that the young American would be killed before he could reach him.

For twenty minutes the fight was so furious that the result was uncertain. The enemy's boat was strongly manned, its deck crowded with turbaned pirates. It was easy to see that the Tripolitans outnumbered the Americans three to one, and the advantage, in point of size and strength, was also with the enemy, but Decatur did not stop to consider that; he was bent on a holy mission, and meant to leave his dead body there or avenge his brother's murder.

The Americans, keeping together as much as possible, fought in line, driving the enemy forward along the deck.

At last Decatur saw a chance to make a lunge at the assassin. He charged with his pike, but the Turk seized it in his hands and wrenched it away from the American, laughing loudly as he did so.

Decatur drew his sword and saw his previous weapon being used against him.

The Turk raised himself on a coil of rope to give him more strength, and brought down the heavy iron pike with such force that when it struck Decatur's sword it broke it off at the hilt.

Weaponless, the young American stood before the Turk, parrying the blows with his right arm.

A sharp, stinging pain in his chest told him that the point of the pike had entered just above the heart, and he staggered slightly, only to be spitted by the pike a second time.

Decatur wrenched the blade from the wound and

with a sudden twirl tore the weapon from the hands of the Turk, who, finding his weapons gone, grappled with his adversary and both fell to the deck, Decatur being uppermost.

The crews, fighting like demons, had seen the desperate predicament in which their respective leaders were placed, and went to the rescue, only to renew the conflict round their persons.

A Tripolitan officer managed to get behind Decatur and aimed an unseen blow at his head, which would have ended the career of the brave captain, had not Reuben James, who had lost the use of both arms by wounds, rushed in and intercepted the falling scimiter with his own head.

The Turk, exerting to the utmost his immense strength, succeeded in turning Decatur and, getting upon him, held him to the deck with a grip on his throat like that of an iron vise.

Almost blinded with blood and suffocated with the tight grip of the Turk's right hand, Decatur had but little chance, especially as the Turk reached with his right hand to his sash and drew the shorter of two yataghans, which, for the very purpose of such close work, he carried in the same sheath.

Decatur's life seemed to be at an end.

His comrades were powerless, for they were driven back and overpowered.

There did not seem time to offer a prayer for mercy in the next world.

But perhaps Decatur did not think of so doing. He was cool and collected, though dying, and as he gazed upward and saw the descending blade of the yataghan, he suddenly disengaged his left hand, caught the wrist of the Tripolitan officer and so stayed the yataghan's descent.

He managed at the same time to free his right hand and get it into his pantaloons' pocket, where he had a

pistol. He cocked it and drew it quickly, then, blind with blood as he was, he felt over the body of his assailant until he found a vital part.

He fired, and the Turk fell over dead.

That was the turning point.

Decatur struggled to his feet, disengaging himself from the pile of dead and wounded, and staggered to the ship's side.

The Americans, seeing their loved leader on his feet, again charged the Tripolitans, led by McDonough.

The sight of the blood-stained face of their captain made them desperate, and the Tripolitans were driven back, until crying for mercy they began to throw away their arms.

The victory was complete, but the loss was great.

At the same time Lieut. Trippe was achieving a victory almost similar to that of Decatur, thought against smaller odds.

Trippe and the Tripolitan commander were engaged in a deadly duel, Trippe receiving no less than eleven wounds before he succeeded in killing his antagonist.

The Tripolitans, seeing that the Americans were getting a decisive advantage, sent out the reserve of gunboats, but the *Constitution* saw their move and poured a deadly fire into the opening in the rocks through which they had to make their way, and they were driven back.

Decatur and Trippe were able to withdraw with their prizes.

The engagement was a fearful one, as can be judged from the fact that in the two prizes of Decatur, thirty-three officers and men had been killed, and an unknown number driven overboard. Twenty-seven prisoners had been taken, of whom nineteen were badly wounded.

In the boat captured by Trippe, with Midshipman Henly and nine seamen, fourteen of the enemy had

been killed, and twenty-two taken prisoners, including seven badly wounded.

The *Constitution* had sunk three Tripolitan gunboats, most of their crews perishing in the waves.

It was a glorious victory, and one that was a credit to all concerned.

The battle over, Decatur was able to think of his brother and asked that he might be spared from duty until he had time to bury his dear younger brother.

Commodore Preble told him that James still lived, that the unconsciousness taken for death had passed, but there was no hope for recovery.

Decatur took Morris, McDonough and Somers with him to his brother's boat.

They found James lying on the deck, still alive, as Preble had said, but again unconscious.

Stephen knelt down by his brother and whispered: "James, don't you know me?"

But there was no response.

Carefully and tenderly the young officers lifted the dying man, or rather boy, for he was only a little over twenty, and placed him in the commodore's barge.

It was hard for Stephen, for he loved his brother with a passionate devotion.

When the *Constitution* was reached, Stephen asked to be allowed to stay at his brother's side.

The request was granted, and the brave young captain sat looking into his brother's fast glazing eyes.

It was heartrending to see Stephen, who, as tenderly as a woman, nursed his brother.

Only once did James appear to know him, and then a smile passed over his face.

"James, your murderer is dead," cried Stephen. "I killed him."

The sun was sinking in the west, and Stephen still watched. His vigil was a lonely one, for the commodore respected his grief and bade all to leave him alone.

It was getting dark, and James turned slightly and appeared as though he wished to speak.

"Do you want anything, James?"

The dying man's eyes opened and he smiled as he saw his brother.

"I am tired; good-night."

They were the first words he had spoken, and the last, for even as he spoke them the last flickering breath left his body and James Decatur had given his life for his country.

And as the life left his feeble and wounded body the sun's last rays fell on his head like a golden halo, illuminating the patriotic martyr and making him appear grandly radiant as he passed through the dark valley.

Then came the sad preparation for the burial at sea.

Stephen insisted on assisting in the last rites. Decently dressed in the uniform he had adorned, and covered with the ever glorious Stars and Stripes, the body of James Decatur was raised on shot boxes placed between two guns on the after part of the main deck.

"Poor James; how sad to die just in the midst of victories!" said Midshipman Morris.

"I would rather see him thus than living with any cloud on his conduct," answered Stephen.

On the following morning the body was followed to the gangway of the *Constitution* in solemn procession to the sound of funereal music by his mourning brother and the officers and men of the *Constitution* and representatives of the other ships.

Commodore Preble read the burial service, and as the last words were uttered committing the body to the deep, the body slid down the gangplank and sank in the spacious grave of the glorious Mediterranean.

Volleys of musketry pealed their appropriate requiem over the closing water, and James Decatur had passed from his mortal life.

The commodore promulgated a general order to the

squadron in which he lamented his death, and wrote his epitaph:

“The commodore deeply regrets the death of the brave lieutenant, James Decatur, who nobly fell at the moment he had obliged an enemy of superior force to strike to him.”

What better epitaph than this official one could man wish?

CHAPTER XXIII.

PROMOTION.

The bashaw began to have a better opinion of American courage, and through the French consul made a proposition that the commodore should send a representative on shore to treat with him.

Carefully did the commodore examine the bashaw's castle to see if the white flag of truce was there, but the piratical chief of Tripoli had hoisted no peace flag, and so the invitation was not accepted.

Preble called his officers round him and told them of his new plan.

Especially did he ask Decatur to give his opinion, for he valued the young captain's clear sight.

"I propose," said the commodore, "to station the gunboats and bombards in the small bay to the westward of the town, where they will be clear of the enemy's guns, and from which point they can attack the westernmost batteries at close quarters, and annoy the town with shot and shell."

"If I might suggest," said Decatur, "I would have the *Vixen* and *Siren* support the boats, and the *Constitution*, with the rest of the squadron, remain to windward to keep the enemy's flotilla in check, and to cut them off, should they venture behind the rocks to attack the gunboats."

"Most excellent suggestion. It shall be adopted."

On the seventh of August the attack was made.

The gunboats, of which there were nine, three of the captured ones being pressed into service, were again in two divisions, commanded by Decatur and Somers.

Covered by the guns of the brigs and schooners, they dashed boldly in.

Immediately the enemy opened a furious fire on them from the castle, the forts and the gunboats that were ranged across the harbor.

Five hundred solid shot were fired at the forts in addition to the shells.

Some of the batteries were silenced, the gunners being driven from their guns.

Some of the enemy's guns were served with hot shot.

At half-past three one of these hot shots passed through the magazine of one of the prize gunboats belonging to Decatur's division.

The after part of her immediately blew up, carrying all who were on the quarter-deck into the air.

Lieut. James Caldwell, who commanded the boat, Midshipman John Dorsey and eight petty officers and seamen were instantly killed.

Decatur's attention was called to the boat, and he saw that all abaft the mast was under water.

He was near enough to make his voice heard through the trumpet.

"Leave the boat and swim to the nearest," he called out to the survivors.

"Ay, ay, sir," the answer was carried back by the wind.

The bow, though settling rapidly, was still afloat, and on it stood Midshipman Robert Spence, Gunner's Mate Kennedy and ten gallant seamen, the sole survivors of the crew.

As the boat was sinking the seamen reloaded their gun, as coolly as though the water was not gaining on them, then pointed it carefully and fired it, just as the water had reached their knees.

Then they gave three hearty American cheers as the boat sank beneath the waves.

Midshipman Spence could not swim; he had not thought of that before, so anxious was he to fire one more shot for his country.

He grasped one of the sweeps and succeeded in sustaining himself until rescued. The others swam to the boats, and without one thought of the involuntary bath, took their places at the guns and lent their exertions to defeat the enemy.

The wind having freshened from the north-northeast so as to draw in the harbor, Commodore Preble signaled for the bombards and gunboats to retire from the action which they had sustained at close quarters for three hours.

When Decatur reported to the commodore he received the thanks of that officer and was warmly congratulated by him.

Standing by the side of Commodore Preble when Decatur reported was a stranger.

As soon as the young officer had finished his report, the stranger put out his hand and grasped Decatur's.

"I have just come from our loved land," he said, "and it has been my proud privilege to witness part of the action in which you have so distinguished yourself."

"Just arrived from America?" repeated Decatur.

"Yes, in the *John Adams*. I am Commander Chauncey."

"I have often heard of you, sir."

"And we all at home have heard of you. I tell you, Capt. Decatur, that every man in the States honors you."

"Yes, I can believe Commander Chauncey," added Preble, "for I have received a letter from the President, in which he refers to you in the warmest manner."

Isaac Chauncey had interested himself in Decatur, and though his senior, was proud of the distinction of his fellow countryman.

All hands were mustered on the deck of the *Constitution*, including officers from the other vessels of the fleet, by order of the commodore.

In a loud voice, which was at times tremulous, the commodore said:

"Brother officers and men of the United States Navy, I am proud to be able to give you news of the land we all love. The President desires me to thank you for your patriotic zeal, and Congress has restored the rank of commander to the navy, which makes one more rank to which you can aspire.

"Lieut. Decatur, called captain by courtesy, is now a post captain, and I have the pleasure to hand him his commission, and this officer, Commander Isaac Chauncey, is the bearer of a sword which is presented by Congress to our gallant friend."

The officers and men could not refrain from cheering, and so enthusiastic was the cheering that Preble had to lay down his report and wait until it was over.

When he was able to resume he told them that Congress had also sent an order for each of the officers and crew of the ketch *Intrepid* to draw two months' pay extra for their services in destroying the frigate *Philadelphia*.

"Other rewards await those who have so bravely served their native land," added the commodore, "and Lieuts. Stewart, Hull, Smith and Somers are to each take the rank of commander. The bravery of Midshipman Spence calls for recognition, and I appoint him acting lieutenant, assuring him that he will receive his commission as full lieutenant as soon as his bravery is known at home. The gunner's mate, Kennedy, is promoted to acting midshipman, and I am sure that he will show the same energy and zeal as he has done in the lower rank."

Again the cheering burst forth, and each man was congratulated on his promotion.

"I have known your worth, gentlemen, and I sincerely trust that you will as ably second the efforts of my successor as you have mine."

The officers looked at each other and wondered what he meant.

"Your successor?" repeated Decatur, more bold than the rest.

"Yes; the navy is so limited that the President, in sending out more ships, could not find enough juniors to command them, so I am superseded, and we shall all have to obey the commands of Commodore Samuel Barron, who is on his way to take charge."

"It is a shame!"

"A dastardly act."

"Gentlemen, I cannot allow such language to be used in such a connection. We are all serving the same government, and whether in a subordinate or higher position, we should count it worthy to do something for our native land. I cannot but regret that our naval establishment is so limited as to deprive me of the means and the glory of completely subduing the haughty tyrant of Tripoli while in chief command, but I shall give my successor, as I am sure you will, all the assistance possible."

"Three cheers for Commodore Preble!" called out Somers, and the response was most pleasing to the gallant officer who had deserved so well of his country.

"Three cheers more," cried Decatur.

Again the waters carried over their bosom the rousing cheers of the American officers and men, and the other ships took up the cheering, though ignorant of the cause.

While the cheering was in progress a boat was seen approaching the *Constitution* from Tripoli, bearing the French flag.

Preble ordered the flag to be saluted, and the Frenchman returned the salute.

The boat contained the French consul, who was asked by the bashaw to present to Preble an offer for the release of Capt. Bainbridge and his crew.

"I will make peace with the United States," said the

bashaw, "and release all the American prisoners on the payment of five hundred dollars for each of the captives."

"I thank you, sir, for your courtesy in bearing the message from the bashaw, and shall hold you in esteem, but I want you to convey to him my answer. Tell him that every American belonging to the *Philadelphia* shall be released without the payment of one cent of ransom."

"But the bashaw is fortifying fresh places, and in a few weeks will make Tripoli absolutely impregnable," added the French consul.

"Let him make it as strong as he may, the Americans shall be released or there shall not be left one stone on another in the whole city."

"That is your absolute answer?"

"It is. I have the honor to wish you good-day."

No sooner had the consul returned to his boat than Preble called Decatur and Somers to him and told them that they must be ready to renew the attack on the forces of the bashaw.

Later in the day he sent Capts. Decatur and Chauncey in two small boats to reconnoiter the harbor and observe the exact arrangements of the enemy's flotilla during the night, as they were in the habit of changing their positions.

It was after midnight when the two officers returned, and to the surprise of the commodore they brought in a small boat which they had captured from the enemy, and better than all, they had picked up a deserter who was able to give them valuable information.

"How came you to capture the boat?" asked Commodore Preble.

"It so happened," said Chauncey, "that Capt. Decatur thought it was a great pity to be among the enemy's craft without getting some trophy, so we looked round and found a boat well laden with ammunition, which

evidently was intended for one of the gunboats, and we took it."

"But the crew?"

"There were only two men on board and we hailed them, and before they knew what was the matter we had boarded the boat and gagged the crew."

"Where are the men?"

"In the bottom of the boat, afraid to stir for fear; they are surrounded by kegs of powder. We had just secured the boat when we heard a voice, evidently of some swimmer, and Decatur asked what was wanted."

"I am afraid that you were very daring, and might have imperiled your lives."

"We were very careful. An answer came back that a man was in the water wanting to reach the American fleet, so we pulled over to where the voice came from and captured the deserter."

The stores from the boat were brought on deck, and Preble was delighted at the capture, for it was found that besides several barrels of gunpowder, there were a number of yataghans, boarding pikes and scimiters, all of which would be very useful. The prisoners were questioned, but refused to say anything about the state of affairs in Tripoli, for they expected to be tortured should they fall into the hands of the bashaw.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SOMERS' DARING PROPOSAL.

"Somers, if I fall, will you see that no man maligns my name?" said Decatur, ever sensitive about what people should say of him.

"No one will ever say aught but that you were one of the bravest men that ever trod a deck."

"You think that?"

"I am sure of it. You have won immortal renown."

"But after one is dead evil minds find flaws. I am not perfect, but I do know I have done my best for my country."

"Everyone knows that. It is more likely that I shall fall than you. I have a premonition that my life may be a short one."

"Premonitions are nothing but the dreams of a disordered stomach or a tired brain," answered matter-of-fact Decatur.

"Yes, I try to think so, but I cannot dispel the thought."

"Like a bad dream the premonition hangs around me for a long time."

"I only hope that if I have to die soon I may die fighting for my country."

"You will live to fight many a battle for dear old fatherland, and when you die your epitaph will be written on your country's mind: 'He loved his country and served his kind.'"

Somers was twirling a ring around his finger, and a sudden thought prompted him to remove it. He looked at it a moment, and then, with a hammer lying by, broke it in two.

"Capt. Dick, I want you to take one of these pieces,

the ring was given me the day we both entered the service, and keep the half as long as you live in remembrance of me."

"How melancholy you are, my boy."

"Not melancholy, only I was thinking of the old times, and I thought I should like to see the green banks of the Delaware once more, and I would like to look at old Independence bell again, and, Capt. Dick, do you remember that old flat tomb in the Quaker burial ground, the one we used to hide behind? Of course you do. Well, when you go back to Philadelphia, go to that tomb, and at the northeast corner, close to the stone, if you will dig down you will find a little tin box—I don't think anyone has removed it—take it and you will find inside that half coin you gave me, and some other little things. Keep them for my sake."

An officer approached the two young captains and saluted.

"The commodore is waiting to see Capt. Decatur and Capt. Somers."

All conversation was ended. The commodore's order must be obeyed at once, and the two captains, friends all their lives, went, arm in arm, into the commander's room.

They received their orders for a new attack on the castle, town and gunboats, the two divisions to be led again by the two young captains.

"When shall the attack be made?"

"At night. We will show these heathen that we can fight when most people sleep. Be ready to commence the attack as soon after midnight as possible."

The clocks had only struck three, the muezzins had chanted their call to prayer, beginning, "Prayer is better than sleep," a special call for the extra devout who rose from their beds to pray at that hour, the bells on the fleet had sounded six times in the middle watch when the gunboats under the command of Decatur and

Somers were brought to anchor, with springs on their cables, within pistol shot of the rock, and in five minutes more had commenced a destructive cannonade on the shipping, town, batteries and bashaw's castle.

The brigs and schooners of the squadron kept under way, just without the line of gunboats, to cover and support them.

The bashaw was sleeping when the first cannon was fired.

He roused himself, and with sundry expressions more forcible than polite, demanded of his attendant, whom he had summoned, what the noise meant.

A crashing of a portion of the castle wall told him that the guns were not fired in a friendly spirit.

"These dogs of Christians fight by night as well as by day. What, by the beard of the prophet, does it mean?"

The cannonade continued, notwithstanding the fact that the bashaw declared it was wrong to fight at night.

By half-past five in the morning the *Constitution* was within two cables' length of the rocks, and had commenced a heavy fire on the gunboats, one of which was instantly sunk, and two ran ashore to avoid sinking.

Unaccustomed to attacks by night, the garrison was badly prepared and offered but slight resistance at first, but just as they were ready to fight like the demons they were, the order was given by the commodore for our boats to retire.

Then the *Constitution* continued to run into the harbor, until within musket shot of the Crown and Mole batteries, when she hove to and fired three hundred round shot, besides grape and canister into the town, bashaw's castle and batteries, silencing the castle for some time.

Capt. Bainbridge and his fellow prisoners saw the last part of the fight, and rejoiced as the men on the

Constitution shortened sail as deliberately as if she were entering a home port.

Then, as she backed her topsail and let fly her thirty great guns in broadside, Bainbridge called for three hearty American cheers for Commodore Preble.

The bashaw sent for Bainbridge and asked him to write to the commodore.

"Tell the accursed dog that I will liberate you all on payment of two hundred dollars each, or I will let you go and negotiate, if you will give me five thousand dollars, the balance to be paid when the others are released."

"I shall not do it."

"Why?"

"Because I would rather rot in your vilest dungeon than allow my country to purchase my freedom."

"You are a dog."

The bashaw could not understand such a sentiment, and flung himself out of the room, feeling highly indignant.

He sent the same offer through the French consul, and received a reply which did not improve his temper.

"We will spend millions in fighting you, and will release our countrymen, but not one cent will we pay you for their freedom."

The bashaw again sent a message to the American, threatening to kill the prisoners.

"They are your prisoners," answered Preble, showing his hot blood in his language, "and you can kill them while you have the power, but if one of them is killed, I will have your life, and for each who dies ten Tripolitans shall also die. Now you know what to expect."

The message made the bashaw tremble, for he was getting short of ammunition and was unable to send to Constantinople for more.

It was the commodore's custom to have the captains

report to him daily and discuss various plans for the campaign.

That day Somers listened to the commodore, who was deploring that the season was nearly over, and that only a few days remained for active hostilities before the winter prevented further operations on that inhospitable coast.

"Why not send an infernal into the harbor to destroy the shipping and shatter the castle and town?" asked Somers, quietly.

"Have you thought how to do it?" Preble inquired.

"No, sir; the idea only just entered my mind."

"Think it out, Mr. Somers, and report as soon as possible."

Preble spoke sharply. He was a fiery-tempered man, and things had not gone well with him that day. Somers did not feel hurt at the manner, but set to work on the plan.

In less than an hour he asked the commodore to listen to his scheme.

Preble had got over his streak of ill temper, and apologized to his "boy captain" for his sharp speech.

Somers had asked Decatur to be present to listen to the scheme.

"Well, sir, and what have you to propose?"

"Commodore, I would suggest that the ketch, *Intrepid*, should be the infernal, or fire ship. I would stow one hundred barrels of powder and one hundred and fifty fixed shells on board. Then in another part of the ketch I would have a good supply of splinters and well-oiled combustibles.

"I would tow the ketch into the harbor through the western passage as near as possible to the shipping. Then I would light my fuses, which ought to burn ten or fifteen minutes, and at the same time would light my combustibles."

"What for?"

"So that the enemy, seeing the blaze, would not at-

tempt to board the ketch. The *Intrepid* would drift among the shipping, and when the current carried her close to the batteries the fuses would do their work, and the explosion would destroy most of the shipping and very likely the town."

"I like your plan, but how many men would it require?"

"I should think two boats to tow the infernal in, four men in one boat and six in the other, with an officer in each—in all twelve men."

"But who would undertake such a desperate thing?"

"I would, commodore. It is no greater risk than Decatur took in the same ketch when he destroyed the *Philadelphia*."

"It is very plausible, Capt. Somers. But suppose that before you are ready, before you light the fire, you are seen and a superior force sent out; we will suppose you are boarded, we should be giving the enemy the powder that he needs, and we should lose it."

"No, commodore. If such a thing happened, and the ketch was boarded, I would run up the Stars and Stripes, wait until the enemy had gathered on the deck of the ketch, and then light the fuse. We should all be blown up, but the result would be worth the risk."

As he spoke the face of the "boy captain," as Preble always called Somers, lighted up with a smile as though a heavenly beam of glory had rested on it.

"But the service would lose you."

"Yes, commodore; but the country would gain a great victory. But I have no fear. I feel sure I should succeed."

CHAPTER XXV.

DEATH OF SOMERS.

There was something heroically noble in the proposition made by the young captain.

Preble wanted to strike an effectual blow at the bashaw's power before he handed over the command to his superior, whom he was expecting daily. If Somers could succeed, such a blow would be so effective that it would be easy to dictate terms of peace which should be honorable to the States and sufficiently humiliating to Tripoli.

The commodore would not give an answer just then, but promised to consider the proposition.

"What do you think of it, Decatur?" Preble asked as he walked up and down the deck with the young officer.

"It would be a glorious work. I only wish I might have the good fortune to carry it out."

"You think it would be practicable?"

"I think, sir, that it would redound to the honor of our flag."

To Decatur that was always the first thought. He never heeded danger, he did not think of life; his one and only thought was for the flag he loved, the country he served.

In an hour Somers had received his commission to carry out his scheme, providing that he could get enough volunteers to assist him.

"I will have no man go on compulsion," said the commodore; "only those who are tired of life, or think it worth the risk must go."

The officers were mustered, and the question put to them.

Every man volunteered.

In vain Somers talked of the great risk; not one would withdraw.

"Lawrence, you were with Capt. Decatur, do not be greedy; let some one else have a share in this enterprise," said one of the officers, and his last words were but an echo of the thoughts in each man's mind.

Then the commodore interfered and ordered all who had taken part in certain enterprises to stand to one side, but Decatur suggested that no man should be forbidden to fight for his country.

"Let each man write his name on a slip of paper, and then let two names be drawn by some one not in the secret," he suggested.

This was agreed upon, and the powder-monkey selected to make the drawing took out of the bag two slips, and on those slips were the names of Lieuts. Wadsworth and Israel.

The other officers crowded round the two and congratulated them on the result.

One would have thought that the drawing of the names meant the conferring of some high honor, so loud were the others in their congratulations.

Ten seamen were selected from the volunteers, and Somers had his crews complete. Preble placed at his disposal two of the fastest rowing boats of the squadron, to tow out the *Intrepid* and bring back the crew.

On the evening of September the fourth, at eight o'clock, the breeze being favorable, the *Intrepid* got under sail, and stood into the harbor of Tripoli.

She was convoyed as far as the rocks by the *Argus*, *Vixen* and *Nautilus*, and then left to pursue her own course, while the three vessels hovered in the neighborhood, to watch the sequel of the enterprise and pick up the boats on their return.

When the *Intrepid* was a cable's length from the other vessels the "boy captain" called his two officers and ten men together.

"Brothers—I call you so now, for in this expedition we are equal—I do not disguise from you that my thoughts are against any of us ever seeing America again. It is not too late for you to turn back——"

"We shall stay by you, captain, and if we die, we shall die for our country."

"That is true, and your country will never forget you. But remember, we have a lot of powder on board, not one pound of that must fall into the hands of the enemy."

"We must stand together and die together. If we are surrounded we must blow up the *Intrepid*, and I shall claim the honor of applying the match."

The *Intrepid* entered the offing, and drawing rapidly ahead, they reached the western passage of the harbor.

Above them the stars twinkled, and the fleecy clouds floated like so many gauzy, winding sheets for brave men. Before them the town, with all its white towers and gilded minarets, its black forts and bristling batteries.

"Men," whispered Somers, "we are within a few minutes of death or glory, perhaps of both; let us each, for himself, offer up a prayer to that God who watches over the destinies of nations, not only for success, but for our souls."

And there, in the darkness of the night, on that powder ship, those men breathed up a silent prayer, and each asked for success in the undertaking before committing his soul to its Maker.

The breeze had died out, and the men had to trust to their oars, which were muffled.

The men in the boats towing the *Intrepid* suddenly felt their hearts leap into their throats, for right close to them were two Tripolitan gunboats.

The Americans had been seen, and the enemy thought it could make an easy capture of the *Intrepid*.

Quickly the men pulled back to the *Intrepid* and told Somers what they had seen.

While Wadsworth was telling Somers, the gunboats loomed into sight, and the *Intrepid* was surrounded.

"*Allah il Allah!*" shouted the Tripolitans.

Somers stood watching the gunboats close in upon him.

He was like one in a dream.

"Brothers, the hour has come. Good-by, it is for our country," he exclaimed in a loud, clear voice, and added: "Up with the flag, let us once more see the Stars and Stripes."

With a cheer the flag rose in the night air and the Tripolitans gave a yell of triumph; they were sure of capturing the ketch.

Somers saw them get ready their grappling irons and boarding pikes, but he made no move.

By his side stood Wadsworth and Israel, and the men gathered on the deck, awaiting orders.

A grappling iron had been thrown, and the *Intrepid* was made fast to a Tripolitan gunboat, when Somers stooped down, but only for an instant. He bared his head and pointed to the flag.

In a moment there was an explosion, as if the thunders of heaven had all broken loose and concentrated their energies on that one spot. The ships in the harbor shivered from keel to main deck, the castle of the bashaw rocked like a cradle. The sea was illuminated with a red glare, and the reflection in the sky could have been seen for hundreds of miles.

Those on the *Argus* saw a mast and a sail of the *Intrepid* rise up to the clouds and fall into the sea, and that was all.

So great had been the explosion that the concussion had extinguished every light in the town and on the shipping.

From the American ships boats were sent out in the hope that some of those brave thirteen men had been saved alive.

All through the night Decatur swung on the fore-

chains of his ship, flashing a lantern in the hope that some survivor might see it, but the hours passed and the dawn drove away the black clouds, but no living being of that noble thirteen had been seen.

Somers had perished. The dearest friend Decatur had, the one who had been nearest and dearest to him at school, at college and in the navy, had given his life for his country.

Though he had failed in destroying the shipping, by the premature explosion of the *Intrepid* made necessary by the attempted boarding by the enemy, yet he had struck terror into the enemy, and even the bashaw was led to declare that the Americans fought like demons and would never accept defeat.

The war was over for a season, and Decatur could not then avenge the death of his friend as he had the murder of his brother.

Preble sent him as senior officer of the fleet with the *John Adams*, the *Siren*, *Nautilus*, *Enterprise* and *Scourge*, having the bomb boats and gunboats in tow, to Syracuse, where he was bidden wait for better weather and new orders.

CHAPTER XXVI.

“UNDER THAT FLAG I WAS BORN, UNDER THAT FLAG I
WILL DIE.”

“I feel a pleasure in leaving the *Constitution* under the command of that officer whose enterprising and manly conduct I have often witnessed, and whose merits entitle him to so handsome a command.”

So wrote Commodore Preble to the secretary of the navy when he transferred the command of the squadron to Commodore Samuel Barron, and determined to return home in the *John Adams*.

The first to congratulate Decatur was Capt. Stewart, who clasped his hand and declared that every American was proud of the officer who had risen to command the finest frigate in the navy before he had reached his twenty-fifth birthday.

When the Pope of Rome heard of the promotion of Decatur he declared that the young American had earned the right to be called the “Champion of Christendom,” and that the United States had done more to humble the anti-Christian barbarians on the African coast than all the European states had done for a long period of time.

The *Constitution* requiring calking and fitting, Decatur repaired to Malta, that being nearest to the scene of the war.

Never once did Decatur falter because the governor of that island had once demanded that he should be given up to the British authorities for the part he took in the duel which led to the death of the governor’s secretary.

He knew no fear; he was conscious of no wrong-

doing, and a man who has a clear conscience is brave, even in the presence of danger. It is true as Shakespeare wrote:

"Thrice is he arm'd that hath his quarrel just;
And he but naked, though lock'd up in steel,
Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted."

When the *Constitution* entered the port the young captain sent notice of his arrival to the governor, and followed his messenger to the official residence.

Sir Alexander Ball, the friend of Lord Nelson, England's greatest admiral, had often wanted to see Decatur, and when he received his message he wrote an autographic invitation to dine at the residence.

Decatur was ushered into the official presence, with the invitation in his hand. Sir Alexander Ball smiled and welcomed him warmly.

"I came, your excellency," said Decatur, "because you at one time demanded that I be given up to you to be tried for a breach of the law."

"I remember; it was that unfortunate duel between my secretary and Midshipman Bainbridge."

"Yes, your excellency."

"I have learned the truth about that since, and declare that you acted exactly as I should have done in your place. Will you dine with me this evening? I shall have pleasure in introducing you to my new secretary."

Decatur thanked him and accepted the invitation.

"The invitation is extended to one of the junior officers."

"I would like to bring Midshipman McDonough."

"I have heard his name, and would like to welcome him."

The governor's secretary was the poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who thirty years afterward used to tell of that dinner at which the guest of honor was Stephen.

Decatur, and who was ever ready to utter a word of praise of the young captain.

"The United States will be unconquerable so long as it can produce youths like Stephen Decatur," said Cole-ridge, many years after that meeting at Malta.

Many times did Decatur dine at the gubernatorial mansion, and no one could speak more highly of the young American than Sir Alexander Ball.

While the *Constitution* was undergoing the necessary repairs, the officers were lionized by all, and many of the unmarried ones received very strong hints, equal to proposals, from very eligible young ladies.

One day Decatur received a letter written in a feminine style of chirography and addressed to "Capt. Stephen Decatur, the terror of the seas and the friend of the helpless," begging him to meet the writer at a certain place that day.

Being fond of a joke and absolutely fearless, he determined to accept the invitation, especially as the hour was early, scarcely the time which lawless ones would select.

Arrived at the corner of the public gardens mentioned in the note, Decatur waited and watched for the writer.

He scarcely knew how he was going to recognize her, but trusted to fate.

After waiting some time and noticing all the ladies who walked by him, he was about leaving, when his attention was attracted to a sedan chair, which was carried by two very dark-skinned Hindoos.

The bearers were dressed in Oriental costume, and with their white turbans and snow-white robes, relieved by a gold sash, they looked picturesque to a degree.

"Capt. Decatur." The words were uttered by the occupant of the chair, and our hero saluted his unknown admirer.

"At your service, madam," he responded, gallantly.

"I have much to say to you. Bid my bearers to return in half an hour and I will feel free to talk."

Decatur did as he was bidden, wondering all the while whether the speaker was old or young, married or single, an Oriental or a European.

"Shall I find a seat for you?" he asked.

"No, I will stay in my chair. You may get a seat near me, and then open the door."

The occupant of the chair was an aged lady with white hair and wrinkled face. Her voice was youthful and musical as any trained singer.

"I have heard so much of you, Capt. Decatur, and all that I hear is so greatly in your favor, that I wanted to see you."

The American bowed.

"I am very rich and quite alone in the world. My grandson was a prisoner of the barbarian who rules over Tripoli, and was brutally murdered by the bashaw's orders."

"I am very sorry."

"I knew you would be. You have made the bashaw tremble. He fears you. If you were to demand a large sum of money as ransom for my murdered grandson he would pay it."

"Madam, you must see the commodore of the fleet, or our consul——"

"I am not an American."

"Then I fear I cannot——"

"I did not ask you. No money would pay for his loss. I have enough, I am rich, I can indulge my fancies. I like you. I am proud of you. I want to make a proposition to you, a business one. Will you allow me?"

"Certainly, madam. I shall be pleased to hear you, and if I can be of any service to one who has suffered through the bashaw, I shall be most happy."

"Had my grandson lived he would have been about

your age. I read in the *Malta Gazette* that you were twenty-five. Am I right?"

"You are, madam."

"I want to adopt you. I want you to take the place of him I have lost. I want you to be my grandson."

"You are not American."

"No, but what of that?"

"I am in the service of my country."

"And won the proudest name man could have. But you have won renown enough, so leave the service, rest upon your laurels. You shall have wealth, honors you have already; you shall travel all over the world; a vessel shall be purchased, or built, for you. Only say you will accept."

"Madam, I cannot express my thanks for your kind offer, but I am not free to accept it."

"It has come upon you too suddenly. Take time to think of it. See my lawyer, he will tell you that the Countess Crevecchi is one to be trusted. Nay, he will tell you that I can get the title transferred to you, and you shall be the Count Decatur, of Crevecchi, in the kingdom of Naples."

"Madam, I——"

"I will ask you to meet me here in four days from now at the same hour, and then you can give your answer. My bearers have returned. I bid you *au revoir*."

She held out her hand and Decatur raised it to his lips and kissed it as gallantly as though she had been a queen.

The sedan chair was carried away, and Decatur, captain in the United States Navy, with no other means than a captain's pay, watched it depart, and his thoughts shaped themselves in this fashion:

"Count Decatur, of Crevecchi, with wealth greater than that of the King of Naples. I can be the possessor of all. Title, lands, money. And the price? Giving up my career in the navy. Renunciation of my country. Ceasing to be a citizen of a free nation and

becoming a subject of a king! No, no, Stephen Decatur, the price is too great. Far better to be a poor man and free, than a rich man and a subject to a monarch.”

And all the way back to his ship he thought over the proposal which the countess had made, and never once did he hesitate what his answer should be.

As he stepped on the deck of the *Constitution* he looked up and saw the Stars and Stripes floating from the masthead.

He lifted his hat, and gazing at its loved folds as they were formed by the gentle breeze, he ejaculated:

“Under that flag I was born, under that flag I have fought, and, Heaven help me, under that flag I will die. Flag of my land, I salute you! Most glorious flag of earth, I salute you!”

When the repairs were finished he took the *Constitution* back to Syracuse, where he found Preble still waiting, having been busy with his accounts of the expedition.

Commodore Barron transferred Decatur to the *Congress*, a frigate of thirty-six guns, as Capt. John Rodgers was Decatur’s senior, and therefore entitled to the *Constitution*.

“We are in for a hard time,” said Barron to Decatur when giving him instructions, “for the bashaw is arming more men and fitting out more gunboats.”

“I think we shall be ready for him,” was the young captain’s reply.

Commodore Barron was wrong. The bashaw thought better of his resolve.

He heard that Decatur was in command of a frigate, and he remarked to his grand adviser:

“If that American can do so much when in command of a gunboat, he will destroy us entirely now he has a frigate.”

And the fear of Decatur, more than anything else, caused him to propose once more terms of peace.

Ill health compelled Commodore Barron to withdraw, and John Rodgers assumed command.

Col. Lear, who had been commissioned by the United States to arrange a treaty of peace, was successful, and on the third of June, 1805, the bashaw hoisted the American flag, under a salute of twenty-one guns which was immediately returned by a like number from the *Constitution*. in compliment to the flag of Tripoli.

The American prisoners, to the number of more than three hundred, once more rejoined their comrades amid hearty congratulations on their liberation after twenty months of captivity.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"I WILL FIND A WAY TO SEE HIM WITHOUT HIS
CONSENT."

During the war with Tripoli three Tunisian vessels had attempted to break the blockade, and had been captured.

The Bey of Tunis demanded that the vessels should be given up.

Commodore Rodgers declined, for the vessels had been captured legitimately, and belonged to the captors.

Then the bey grew angry and threatened to declare war.

He sent for the United States consul, and in arrogant tones told him that it was all very well to frighten the bashaw of Tripoli into subjection, but it was not easy to terrify him.

"America was the first power that had ever captured a Tunisian cruiser in full peace, the first that had ever offered unprovoked insults to Hamouda Bashaw," he said, haughtily. "You have seen what has been accorded me by Spain, Sweden and Denmark, whose local situation and maritime force render them more formidable enemies than the United States. Your commodores have done me great and repeated injuries, for the last of which my political existence forces me to insist on a proper reparation."

Having thus delivered himself he threw off the hauteur of the ruler and assumed the anger of a very furious citizen, and with a volley of profane words told the consul that the American navy should be sent into a region which is nameless in polite society.

Commodore Rodgers heard of the wrath of the bey, and dispatched Decatur, with the *Congress* and *Vixen*,

in advance, to Tunis, proposing to follow with the rest of the squadron in a short time.

Decatur had nothing to do in Tunisian waters save to watch all that went on and enjoy himself.

He was very fond of pulling about the harbor in his barge and amusing himself with his gun.

On one occasion he saw one of those remarkable fishes known as the devilfish.

He had often seen small ones, but this was a monster, and delighted the sportsman soul of the young captain.

He was determined to possess it. It was one of his ambitions to make a collection of rare marine animals.

He pulled near, fired and struck the devilfish, which sank in shoal water, where it could be seen on the bottom.

Reuben James was acting as coxswain, and Decatur asked him to dive down and bring up the strange fish.

"Excuse me, captain; I'll stand before you if a man is striking you with a saber; I'll face death for you, if death is to come by musket shot or cannon ball, but to tackle that strange creature knocks all the courage out of me."

"Then you refuse?"

"Not exactly, captain, 'cause it isn't right to refuse to obey orders, but I'd rather face a dozen Turks than that ugly customer!"

Decatur smiled; he could not be angry, for he knew the great bravery of his coxswain, and without a word, plunged into the water and in a moment was struggling with the monster.

A more horrible-looking creature was never seen. It had eight long arms attached to a broad, flat body, in the center of which its leering eyes stared defiance at its captor, its large cavernous mouth was surrounded by several horny spines.

As Decatur dragged the creature to the surface, it suddenly seemed to revive its lost energies, and struck

out with its long arms in every direction. Decatur dodged the blows and swam on toward the boat.

"Let it go, captain, for it's the devil himself," shouted James.

Decatur smiled, but held on, and at last landed his capture in the boat, but no sooner was the uncanny thing in the boat than it began to flop about to such an alarming extent that a shot had to be fired into it before the boat was safe.

"You've killed the devil," said James, very seriously.

"Had to, or he would have killed us," was the answer.

The bey heard of the encounter and asked for particulars. When he was told that it was Decatur, of the *Congress*, he looked very worried.

"I wish that he was in America," said the ruler of Tunis. "There is much to be dreaded in that man. He conquers even the terrors of the seas."

A few days afterward Commodore Rodgers, with the United States fleet, arrived at Tunis, and at once Decatur was commissioned to go on shore and co-operate with the consul in settling matters with the bey.

When the consul asked an interview, the bey sent word that he would receive Capt. Decatur as a visitor, but not as a representative of the United States.

"Tell him that I am deputed to act as negotiator," Decatur retorted.

"I will not receive him as such," was the bey's final answer.

"Then tell him that I shall find a way to see him without his consent," was the message sent back by the young captain.

The consul faithfully repeated Decatur's message, and the ruler asked with trembling accents what he meant.

The consul pointed to the captain's boat pulling toward the flagship of the squadron, and it was enough.

"He is not afraid of a devilfish and will not be of

me," mused the bey as he heard that the American commodore was making ready to bombard the city.

He called his chief adviser to him and pointed to Decatur's boat.

"Overtake that boat, reach the *Constitution* before it does, or you shall lose your head."

A hastily written letter to the commodore was handed to the minister, and he called certain skilled boatmen to him and told them that they would sleep in graves that night if they did not pass the captain's boat.

The boatmen bent to their oars and pulled as though they felt a pleasure in the exertion. Their lives depended on their very strength.

For a time it looked as though Decatur would be first, but the Tunisians got right in the way and washed the American so that they gained a great advantage.

Then Decatur's boat came alongside, and for a time the two were side by side. A spurt was put on by the Tunisians, and their boat shot ahead and the *Constitution* was reached.

The bey had written to say he would obey the treaty, and would send an ambassador to the United States to make a personal appeal to the President. He asked that some one should be sent to him to arrange preliminaries, but that Decatur must not be the one.

Rodgers gave the consul power, and so the rupture with Tunis was ended ere it had begun. The foreign consuls at the regency declared that "no other nation had ever negotiated with the present bey on such honorable terms."

To the utter disgust of the bey, Decatur was ordered to receive the Tunisian ambassador and convey him on the *Congress* to America.

Decatur, after a cruise of two years, was glad to get back to his native land.

The ambassador was landed at Washington, and the *Congress* was dismantled and her crew discharged.

Everywhere Decatur was the lion of the hour. The people cheered him and followed him everywhere.

When he reached Philadelphia, on his way to his father's house, he lodged with a friend in Front Street, close to the house where he had spent his boyhood days.

A military corps, the Hibernia Greens, commanded by Capt. Duane, was paraded in front of the house, and the hero was greeted with cheers and music.

Capt. Duane himself led in singing a song of praise, which he claimed to have written, and which afterward became popular in the war of a few years later.

With a voice as loud as the roar of a mountain torrent, Capt. Duane sang:

"Let brave Decatur's dauntless breast
With patriot ardor glow,
And in the garb of victory drest
Triumphant blast the foe.
Let brave Columbia's noble band
With hearts united rise,
Swear to protect their native land
Till sacred freedom dies."

There were several verses of the same kind, each of which the gallant captain sang with great gusto, and his men joined in whenever they could remember the words.

No sooner was it known that Decatur was to remain a short time at home than his old classmates, those who had been at old Abercrombie's and at college with him, determined to give a banquet in his honor.

The walls of the banquet hall were dressed with bunting, any many mottoes and inscriptions told of the esteem in which the guest of the evening was held.

"The nation hails you as one of her favorite sons," was opposite to the chair Stephen Decatur was to fill, while close to it was another testimony of regard:

"You have won the applause of your countrymen."

But over the chair of honor was an inscription which

went right to the heart of the guest. It was only the words:

"Old classmates honor dear old Capt. Dick."

It was an occasion of which anyone could be proud. Stephen Decatur was only twenty-five, but he had won immortal renown in the Old World, he had done more than any man at that time to make the flag respected by the barbarians of Northern Africa, and the entire civilized world had to admit the worth of America's young captain, Stephen Decatur.

How proud the elder Stephen Decatur must have been as he sat between his illustrious son and his younger son, John, who had entered the navy to take the place of the one who had been killed at Tripoli.

"Capt. Dick" rose to respond to the toast which had been so eloquently proposed by one of his old friends, Francis Gurney Smith. For some minutes the cheering was so deafening that he could not be heard, and then when there was a certain measure of silence he was so affected by the heartiness of his welcome that his voice trembled, and it was with difficulty that he was able to thank them for their good wishes. He modestly concluded a short speech by saying that "if an opportunity should be offered, I will endeavor to merit, in some degree, the high opinion you have been pleased to express."

That opportunity came before so many months had passed and Stephen Decatur was destined to win a still greater renown.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE "CHESAPEAKE" AND "LEOPARD."

While the frigate *Congress* was lying at Hampton Roads, with the Tunisian ambassador on board, a schooner, returning to Norfolk with a pleasure party, anchored near the frigate.

Some of the party wished to visit the Tunisian ambassador, more out of curiosity than friendship, and to see the presents he was bringing from the African potentate.

Neither Decatur nor the ambassador were on board, they having landed to inspect the navy yard.

The ladies were shown over the frigate and one of them, a sweet girl of twenty years, reposed on the captain's lounge, laughing at her friends, who thought it a piece of presumption.

She looked round the cabin and her eyes fell on a miniature.

"What a handsome man!" she exclaimed. "I could love such a man."

Calling to one of the middies, she asked whose portrait it was.

"Capt. Decatur, miss."

"Oh!"

Her friends turned the laugh on her and, to use a modern slang expression, guyed her all the way back.

"I don't care," she retorted. "He is a handsome man, and every American ought to love him."

When the young lady reached home, her father, who was mayor of Norfolk, told her that she must be prepared to look her best on the following evening, for the Tunisian ambassador and Capt. Decatur were to dine with them.

Susan Wheeler blushed and felt confused, but that was only natural, considering the rank of her proposed visitors.

At the dinner she acted the part of hostess to perfection, and Decatur was as much struck with her charms as she had been when she saw his miniature.

"He is far handsomer than his picture," she whispered to one of her friends the following day.

"And what thought he of you?"

"How should I know? He did tell of the lady who wanted to adopt him, and then, of course, he could marry a queen if he wanted to, so why should he think of poor little me?"

The conclusion of the war with Tripoli caused the reduction of the navy to be ordered, and many of the officers were placed on half pay and the men discharged. Decatur was retained.

It was resolved to build and equip a number of gunboats for the protection of the coast, and especially for the defense of the Mississippi, the outlet of which was owned by Spain.

Decatur was ordered to command a squadron of gunboats stationed in the Chesapeake, having the rendezvous at Norfolk.

With all the disadvantages of such a system of defense, alike unsuited to form the seaman, the officer or the man of good habits and discipline, Decatur determined to introduce order, system and discipline, so as to qualify it to render such service as it might be called on to perform.

Decatur had not forgotten Miss Susan Wheeler, and he was pleased to accept an invitation to her father's house.

It was not long before he saw in her those rare accomplishments which adorn a woman, and in a characteristic manner he offered her the second place in his affections, the first, he told her, being held by his country.

Her heart's desire was accomplished, and the two loving, devoted and worthy young people were married on the eighth of March, 1806.

A year later there arose a rumbling of discord between England and the United States.

Some Americans who had been impressed deserted from an English ship and the British consul demanded their return.

Decatur was appealed to, but he declined to act, and the matter was referred to Commodore Barron, who was in command of the *Chesapeake*.

The *Chesapeake* was being fitted for the Mediterranean, and on June 22 weighed anchor from Hampton Roads.

An English vessel, the *Leopard*, of fifty guns, got under way from among the British squadron and preceded the *Chesapeake* to sea.

As the latter gained an offing, the *Leopard* hailed her and said that a letter would be sent on board. The letter was from the vice-admiral of the British fleet, ordering the captain of the *Leopard* to search the *Chesapeake* for certain deserters from the British navy.

Commodore Barron gave a written refusal to comply to such a demand, and in less than half an hour the *Leopard* opened fire on the American frigate, which was not in a fit state to return the fire.

Three of the crew of the *Chesapeake* were killed and eighteen wounded, and the commodore grew fearful that more would be killed.

Every heart was sad, every man inwardly cursed the commodore when he ordered the *Chesapeake* to strike her colors.

An English officer boarded the *Chesapeake* and seized four Americans whom he said were deserters.

These men were taken to Halifax and tried by court martial. One of the men was hanged and the others almost killed by the infliction of five hundred lashes each.

When the men had been seized Commodore Barron formally surrendered the *Chesapeake* to the British, but the English officer declared that he had no authority to seize the ship of a friendly nation, and having got the deserters he would leave the *Chesapeake* to proceed on her trip.

When Decatur heard of the action of Barron he did not hesitate to brand him as coward.

"How much better it would have been to die fighting than to submit to a foreign foe!" he said, and the people who heard him answered that such men as Commodore Barron ought to be drummed out of the service.

All through the country the greatest indignation was felt, and if a court-martial had not been ordered the commodore would have been lynched the first time he was in the streets.

Decatur was to serve on the court-martial, but he protested that he would be a biased judge, as he had formed an opinion already, but the Naval Department would not excuse him.

Then he told Barron's counsel what he had done, and asked him to protest against him being a member, but again he was frustrated and no objection was made.

Strange thing that he, the pride of the American navy, should some years later meet his death at the hands of the very man on whom he was now to sit in judgment.

On many of the charges the court acquitted the commodore, but on the one charging that he did not clear his ship for action after receiving the notice from the *Leopard*, he was found guilty and sentenced to be suspended from all commands in the navy, without pay or emoluments, for five years, from February 8, 1808.

Only one shot had been fired by the *Chesapeake*, though the *Leopard* had been firing for eighteen minutes.

It was proved on the trial that just as the flag came fluttering down Lieut. Allen cried out:

"I'll have one shot at those rascals, anyhow!"

He ran to the galley, picked up a live coal in his fingers, carried it regardless of pain to the nearest gun, and fired it.

The telling of the episode brought tears to the eyes of the judges, and when some one in the room called for three cheers for Lieut. Allen not one of the judges tried to stop the torrent of applause.

The greatest excitement prevailed, and the President issued a proclamation ordering all British cruisers to leave American waters at once.

It was impossible to enforce this order, and another proclamation was issued, forbidding all citizens of the United States giving aid to, or having any intercourse with, any such vessels or their crews.

Decatur was given the command of the *Chesapeake*, and instead of going to the Mediterranean, was ordered to guard the southern coast in connection with a force of gunboats.

In addition to that order he was instructed to hoist the broad pennant as commodore, and so at the early age of twenty-eight, he had risen from midshipman to commodore.

But just as he had reaped the greatest harvest of honors, and hastened to lay them at his father's feet, the elder Decatur died.

Full of honors, and only in the prime of life, having reached his fifty-seventh birthday, Stephen Decatur, the elder, passed from earthly struggles into that land where war cannot exist.

And scarcely had the earth closed over the remains of his loved father than our hero had to reopen the grave and lay therein the body of his mother.

Decatur's grief was great, for he had been a dutiful son, loving his father as he deserved, and reverencing his mother for her goodness, her gentleness and affection.

Side by side the loving pair were laid to rest in the churchyard of St. Peter's, in Philadelphia.

Susan Decatur tried to soften the blow which her husband had received, and bade him remember that he had still his two loves—his country and herself—to live for.

CHAPTER XXIX.

WAR WITH ENGLAND.

It was early in 1810 that Decatur received a dispatch from the secretary of the navy which set his heart in a flutter and caused him to be so excited that his wife did not know whether he had been drinking or received some most exciting news.

He pressed her to his breast and with many a kiss told her that he was the happiest man on earth.

She had never seen him so excited, and asked him what was the cause.

"Read that," he answered, handing her an official letter.

It was to the effect that he was assigned to the frigate *United States* and was appointed commodore of the southern station.

"Sixteen years ago, my dear Susan, I selected the keel pieces of that frigate as they grew in the forests of New Jersey, and twelve years ago I stood on her deck as she took her first dip into the waters of the Delaware; twelve years ago I was appointed a midshipman on that frigate, and now I am commodore, and my pennant will float from her mast. Do you wonder I am excited?"

His wife joined in his enthusiasm, and congratulated him on his exalted position.

The British were very irritating toward the Americans, and repeatedly declared that England had ruled the seas, even going so far as to make a national proverb of the distich:

"The winds and seas are Britain's broad domain,
And not a sail but by permission spreads."

Notwithstanding this there were some of the officers who were fair and courteous, and among them Decatur claimed as a friend Capt. John S. Carden, who commanded the *Macedonian*, the finest and most formidable frigate in the British navy.

Soon after Decatur had hoisted the broad pennant on the *United States*, Carden congratulated him, but said that the *United States* was not to be compared with the *Macedonian*, particularly in the matter of guns.

"Besides, Decatur," said Carden, "though your ships may be good enough, and you are a clever set of fellows, what practice have you had in war? There is the rub. We now meet as friends, but we are subject to the orders of our governments, and must obey them. Should we meet as enemies, what do you suppose would be the result?"

"God grant that we may never meet as enemies!" answered Decatur, "but if we do, and with equal forces, the conflict will be a severe one, for the flag of my country will never be struck while there is a hull for it to wave over."

These two men talked as friends, and yet war between their respective countries was nearer than either supposed. England had long been really at war with the United States, for she had boarded vessels and seized American citizens to the number of six thousand, and not one blow had been struck in defense of our rights.

It was not likely that the United States would stand such treatment forever, and so we find on June 18, 1812, after some most exasperating acts of warfare, the United States declared war against Great Britain.

What a piece of daring!

We had a navy consisting of five frigates, three sloops, three brigs and four schooners in commission, and five frigates, two of which were unseaworthy, and four bomb boats in ordinary.

Against us England had a navy numbering nearly one thousand sail, with an aggregate tonnage of near a million, over five hundred sail in commission, of which more than eighty were on the North American and West India stations.

England laughed at our temerity.

"The United States will be wiped out as a nation," said a leading paper.

Rich men's sons volunteered for the English navy because the war would be a picnic.

The *Constitution* was spoken of as "a bunch of pine boards sailing under a bit of striped bunting."

Our largest frigate carried forty-four guns, while England had two hundred and fifty-four ships carrying seventy-four guns each.

No wonder that the entire world scoffed at us!

Within an hour after he had received news of the declaration of war, Commodore Rodgers had his squadron under way, and dropped out of New York Bay to the ocean. He had with him his flagship, *President*, of forty-four guns; the *Essex*, thirty-two, and the *Hornet*, eighteen.

In the lower bay these were joined by the *United States*, forty-four; *Congress*, thirty-eight, and the *Argus*, sixteen.

The first honors of the war were won by England, for the American brig *Nautilus*, fourteen guns, was suddenly overhauled by the entire British fleet, and captured after a plucky but unavailing attempt at flight.

The English were elated even over so small a capture, but they soon had cause to change their tune of victory.

A few weeks later the lookout aloft on the *Constitution*, with a long-drawn hail of "Sail ho-o-o!" announced the discovery of a British vessel.

Capt. Hull, of the *Constitution*, was deliberate in all his acts. He ordered the topgallant sails furled, and the lighter spars lowered to the deck.

At six bells in the afternoon watch the two ships were rapidly nearing, and the drums beat to quarters.

Barefooted men rushed along the deck, but in perfect order, to their places.

The roll of drums died away, and the shrill, boyish voices of the middies arose calling off the quarter-bills, and answered by the gruffer voices of the men at their posts.

Every man knew his place; every man knew exactly what to do. The surgeon, with his assistants, descended to the cockpit; the carpenter and his mates made ready their felt-covered plugs, for stopping holes made by the enemy's shot; the topmen climbed to their posts in the rigging, led by the young middies who were to command them; the line of powder passers was formed and the powder-monkeys grew serious as they fell into line.

The British vessel was the *Guerriere*, commanded by Capt. Dacres, with whom Capt. Hull had spent many a pleasant hour.

The British had not been behindhand with their preparations. The captain of the *Guerriere* had on board a Marblehead sailor, one Capt. Orme, who had been captured a few days before.

"Orme, tell me what you make of the ship," he said, handing the glass to the American prisoner.

"It is an American frigate," answered Orme.

"I don't think so; she comes too boldly; but I'll be on the safe side and clear for action."

Once again the captain looked through his glass and muttered:

"I believe the Yankee is right," then aloud he added: "The better he behaves the more credit we shall gain by taking him."

"It may not be so easy, sir."

"Easy? Bah! there's not an American ship afloat that I cannot make strike its colors in an hour."

Then the gallant Britisher gave orders to back the

mainsail and wait for the Yankee to come on and commence the action. The English flag was set at each masthead and orders were given to beat to quarters and clear the deck for action.

"Officers, there will be big prize money for each of you before the sun goes down, and tell the crew that they will not be forgotten. We shall have to fight for an hour or so, and then up goes the British flag on yonder frigate. Now, then, my men, let us fight as our country demands."

Capt. Dacres had got the notion that Britain ruled the waves and that it was an impossibility for a young nation like the United States to even hold a ship against England's power.

One thing Dacres had not taken into account. The Americans were freemen, the men on board the British ships were many of them forced into service, and though they might fight like demons, they had but a poor incentive for patriotic work.

Dacres was chivalrous, and told Orme and ten Americans who had been impressed that they could go below the water line, as he did not wish to ask them to fight against their country.

The *Guerriere* opened the action with her weather broadside; the shot of which all falling short, she wore round and let fly her port broadside, sending most of the shot through her enemy's rigging, though two shots took effect in the hull.

The *Constitution* was wary and yawed a little, firing two or three of her bow guns, a course of procedure which made the British captain rub his hands with joy.

"Our victory will be easier than I had thought. The fellow has no fight in him," he said to his chief officer.

Again the *Guerriere* poured in her broadsides, the American only firing an occasional shot.

During this ineffectual firing the two vessels were drawing nearer to each other, and the American gunners were getting uneasy at the inaction.

"Let me give them a broadside!" pleaded Lieut. Morris, the second in command.

"Not yet," answered Capt. Hull, calmly.

A few minutes later Morris repeated his request, but again the answer was the same, and some of the men began to think that the *Constitution* was to be surrendered without a fight.

The vessels were within a pistol shot, and Capt. Hull began to gesticulate wildly and shout at the top of his voice:

"Now, then, boys, pour it into them!"

As he spoke he threw up his arms and leaped like a wild schoolboy, splitting his tight breeches from the hip to the knees.

"Hull her, boys!" shouted Morris, getting as excited as the captain, for he now saw that what he had thought cowardice was actually courage and calm, calculating bravery.

The guns belched forth, and the effect of the broadside was terrific.

The *Guerriere* shook and shivered, as if an earthquake had suddenly upheaved the waters. Then there came an explosion, and the mizzenmast was shot away.

Never was man so surprised as Capt. Dacres. His surgeon had more than he could attend to, for the cockpit was full of wounded men.

On both ships the gunners, stripped to the waists, and covered with blood stains, wielded the rammers with frantic energy.

The ships were broadside to broadside, and when the *Guerriere* lost her mizzenmast the falling on the deck made a great hole in the quarter-deck of the ship; while the men were clearing away the wreck the *Constitution* poured in several destructive broadsides, and then she luffed slowly until she lay right athwart the enemy's bow.

While in this position the long bowsprit of the Britisher stretched across the quarter-deck of the *Constitu-*

tion, and was soon fouled in the mizzen rigging of the latter vessel.

Then rang out the blare of the bugles calling the boarders, who sprang from their guns, seized their heavy boarding caps and cutlasses and rushed to the side, but a heavy sea was rolling and boarding was impossible.

So close were the ships that the men used pistols, and the fighting was almost hand to hand.

The cannons, as they protruded from the ports, touched the sides of the opposing ship, and when they were drawn in for loading the marines would put their muskets through the ports and fire at the gunners on the opposing ship.

In an hour the *Guerriere* was a helpless, shapeless hulk, though from one of the masts which had fallen across the deck the British ensign still defiantly floated.

Capt. Hull saw Dacres point to the flag and order it down.

Lieut. Read was sent on board to take possession of the prize, and on being presented to Capt. Dacres, said: "Capt. Hull presents his compliments, sir, and wishes to know if you have struck your flag?"

Dacres looked at the fallen masts and responded:

"Well, I don't know. Our mizzenmast is gone, our mainmast is gone, and I think on the whole you may say that we have struck our flag."

Before returning to the *Constitution* Read asked if he should send a surgeon or surgeon's mate to assist with the wounded.

"I should suppose you had on your own ship business enough for all your medical officers."

"No, Capt. Dacres, we have only seven wounded, and they have been attended to long ago."

Dacres was genuinely astonished, for he had twenty-three dead, and fifty-six badly wounded men.

Dacres presented himself on board the *Constitution*, and unbuckling his sword, handed it to Capt. Hull.

"No, no, Capt. Dacres; I'll not take a sword from one who so well knows how to use it, but I'll trouble you for your hat."

Dacres looked surprised, for he had forgotten that a year before a hat had been wagered between the two on the result, if ever they met in battle. The American had won the hat.

After the prisoners and wounded had been taken off the *Guerriere*, the useless hulk was set on fire, and the sailors watched her blaze until the fire reached the magazine and she vanished in the noise and uproar of a terrific explosion.

Capt. Dacres did not win the easy victory of which he had been so confident.

CHAPTER XXX.

DECATUR'S GLORY.

"Like the fierce bird of Jove the *Wasp* darted forth,
And he the tale told, with amazement and wonder.
She hurled on the foe from her flame-spreading arms,
The firebrands of death and the red bolts of thunder.
And, oh, it was glorious and strange to behold
What torrents of fire from her red mouth she threw;
And how from her broad wings and sulphurous sides,
Hot showers of grape shot and rifle shots flew!"

The stanza we have quoted was from one of the most popular of the street ballads of the day, for the people had reason to sing and shout.

The *Wasp*, a United States sloop of war, had met the British *Frolic* and had captured it, after a fight, which was one of the most desperate on record.

The *Frolic* had gone into the action with a crew of one hundred and ten men, fully officered. When the colors were hauled down only twenty men were uninjured. Every officer was wounded, and thirty of the crew had lost their lives.

On the *Wasp* only three sailors had been killed and five wounded, and these men were either topmen or on duty in the rigging.

Unfortunately the Americans were not able to enjoy their triumph long, for the *Poictiers*, a British ship of seventy-four guns, bore down on the *Wasp* and so damaged her sails that she could not even fly.

The people knew that Jones, of the *Wasp*, deserved credit, and the whole country rang with his praises.

The British were beginning to see that there was a danger of the supremacy of the seas departing from them, and they urged the government to greater exertions.

During this time the *United States*, with Commodore Decatur, had been cruising about hoping to intercept some British West Indiaman.

On a bright Sunday morning the lookout descried a sail about twelve miles away, on the weather beam.

As the distance grew less the sailors on the *United States* grew enthusiastic, as they learned that the rigging of the stranger showed her to be a British war frigate.

And when, a little later, it was known that the foreigner was the *Macedonian*, the crack ship of the British fleet, even Decatur grew excited.

He remembered his conversation with Capt. Carden, and hoped that whatever the result of the engagement might be that the captain would not be killed or wounded.

As the two ships approached each other the *Macedonian* took in her studding sails and hauled by the wind on the larboard tack.

The *United States* cleared deck for action, and, being by the wind on the starboard tack when the *Macedonian* bore a-beam, the American went about, laying her head to the southwest and westward, with her larboard tacks on board, like the Britisher, which now bore forward of her larboard beam and dead to windward, being at eight o'clock only two miles off.

The efficiency of the crew of the *United States* was perfect. The men serving our government knew that the war was for their rights, for had England practiced non-interference with our seamen, no war would have been declared, hence every sailor felt he was fighting for his own rights.

It was just about nine o'clock when the distant cannonade commenced from the heavy guns of both frigates, there being a heavy swell, which disturbed the accuracy of the fire.

For half an hour little damage was done, and De-

catur felt that something must be accomplished or the continual firing would only be a waste of powder.

He called Lieut. Allen and gave him orders, which soon showed results, for the *Macedonian's* mizzen topmast and gaff were shot away, and from that time the *United States'* fire became very destructive.

"The enemy is on fire," shouted the first lieutenant of the British ship, and the drums beat a joyful rat-tat-to.

But it was only the rapidity of the firing of the guns which caused the *United States* to appear to be burning.

Three hearty British cheers answered the drum beat, and even as the men cheered they fell dead, one on the other, for the destruction of life was fearful.

"Americans can fight when they feel like it," said the Comte de Paris, in his "History of the War of Secession," and what was true in 1861 to 1865 was equally true of that earlier war of 1812.

"We have made a brig of her," said the captain of a gun to his comrade, near where Decatur stood, as he saw the mizzenmast of the Britisher fall overboard.

Decatur looked at the gunner, and in a cheery way said:

"Take good aim, my lad, at the mainmast, and she will soon be a sloop."

Then he went to another captain of a gun and hinted to him a change of aim:

"Aim at the yellow streak," he said. "Her spars and rigging are going fast enough; she must have a little more hulling."

One of the sailors saw a favorite comrade carried down to the cockpit, and as he bade him be of good cheer he told him that he must attend to the enemy for a few minutes longer, and then he would be down to attend to him.

"Do you think we shall make her haul down her colors?" asked the wounded man.

"Ay, ay, in a few minutes now."

"Let me live until I hear that," exclaimed the wounded man, "and I shall want care from nobody."

In seventeen minutes after the vessels were in close action, the British crack ship, the *Macedonian*, struck her colors, a complete wreck.

She had received one hundred shots in her hull, several of which were between wind and water.

Everything about her was cut to pieces, and only one of her boats would float.

Out of her crew of three hundred, one hundred and four were killed or wounded, while on the *United States* the number of killed and wounded only amounted to twelve.

Lieut. Allen went on board the *Macedonian*, and he had to hide his face, the scenes of horror were so many.

"Fragments of the dead were distributed in every direction," he wrote in his official report to Commodore Decatur. "The decks were covered with blood, one continual agonizing yell of the unhappy wounded; a scene so horrible that it deprived me of much of the pleasures of victory."

The meeting between Capt. Carden and Decatur was most pathetic, but more like the meeting of friends than enemies.

None of the private property of the English officers was touched, save such as could be of no use to them, and this was paid for by Decatur.

Lieut. Hamilton, the son of the secretary of the navy, was selected to carry Decatur's report and the colors of the *Macedonian* to Washington, and he arrived in that city on December 8, on which evening a ball was being given to the naval officers, especially Capts. Stewart and Hull.

When Hamilton arrived he asked to see the President, and to him handed the report.

President Madison could not restrain his feelings, but rushed into the ballroom, more like a schoolboy

than the chief of a great nation, and shouted at the height of his voice:

"The crack ship of the British has struck her colors to Commodore Decatur!"

All dancing was stopped.

The band struck up a national air, but even the musicians were too excited to play.

Tears blended with the attempts to play, and for once the band broke down.

Then Capt. Stewart and Capt. Hull left the hall and soon returned, escorting Lieut. Hamilton, bearing the colors of the *Macedonian*, which were presented to Mrs. Madison, sweet Dolly Madison, the President's wife.

She thanked the officer, and in a clear voice, which could be heard all over the room, said:

"I wish all present to honor Commodore Decatur and the brave officers and men of the *United States*."

Then there was a burst of applause which seemed to shake the building. The candles quivered and some fell from the magnificent candelabras, the decorations on the walls fluttered as though proud of the honors paid to the flag of the land, and an English flag, which had been hung upside down as a mark of enmity, fell from its place on the wall and was trampled on by some of the crowd before its presence on the floor was discovered.

There was no more dancing that night, but all had the name of Decatur on their lips, and in every heart a joy was manifest which was almost too strong to be borne.

CHAPTER XXXI.

BLOCKADED.

The *Macedonian* was put into good repair and floated the American flag as proudly as ever it had the British. With the *Hornet* it was placed under Decatur's command, and our hero had now a respectable fleet with which to meet the enemy.

Off Staten Island the fleet waited for orders to move and face the British. Day after day the officers chafed under the delay, and Decatur was often heard to utter strong expressions against the red tapeism which impeded his movements.

Many a day he would land on the shores of the beautiful island, and, standing on the heights of Fort Wadsworth, look out to sea and long for the action which a life on the ocean gives.

His wife paid him a visit, and she was enraptured with the gem of New York harbor, and more than once said that after her own loved Norfolk she thought Staten Island the nicest place on earth.

As he expected, the enemy quietly got two line-of-battle ships and three frigates just off the bar, and so effectually blockaded the Narrows.

"I will not wait longer for the department ; I will act on my own responsibility," he wrote to a friend in Washington, and the very next day he started up the East River and into the Sound.

It was a venturesome undertaking, for but few pilots would dare the risks to be encountered in the straits known as Hell Gate.

The dangers of Hell Gate were overcome only to meet with a new peril. Scarcely had the fleet passed through the gate than a fearful storm rose, and the lightning flashed with awful grandeur.

One flash struck the main royal mast of the *United States*, bringing down the broad pennant.

The lightning passed down the conductor and, attracted by a gun, it entered one of the main deck ports, whence it passed into the wardroom hatch, and, skirting the magazine scuttle, entered the surgeon's room, put out his light, tore up his bed, and, descending between the side and ceiling, went out at the water's edge, tearing away a portion of the ship's copper.

It seemed a miracle that the powder escaped, and Decatur was full of joy to think that the ship had sustained so little damage.

For several days the ships moved slowly through the Sound, and on the twenty-ninth day of May reached the neighborhood of Montauk Point.

Again was the gallant commodore defeated in his hopes to gain the ocean, for a formidable line of British ships completely blocked the entrance into the ocean.

Nothing could be done by the Americans but to put into New London and await an opportunity to slip out.

Several times during the next few weeks he tried to draw off the British by well-managed feints, but not once could he get engaged in a duel with one of the enemy's ships.

He learned that the British commodore was Sir Thomas Hardy, the man in whose arms Lord Nelson had passed his last moments on board the *Victory* at Trafalgar.

While waiting at New London Decatur spent much time examining the plans submitted by Robert Fulton of a warship to be propelled by steam, but the time was not then ripe for its use.

Decatur was ready to accept such a warship if completed, for it would enable him to force the blackading squadron from the coast, but he could not wait until one was built.

There was an excitement in the British fleet by the

arrival of a letter from the commodore of the American fleet challenging the British ships *Endymion* and *Statira* to meet in a naval duel the American ships *United States* and *Macedonian*.

Sir Thomas Hardy at first was inclined to accept the challenge, but on second thoughts declined it on the ground that the *Endymion* was not equal in force to the *United States*, though as was afterward pointed out, the difference was more than made up for by the extra number of guns the Britisher carried.

The excuse was a plausible one, but behind it was the fact that had Hardy met defeat at the hands of the American commodore, he would have been court-martialed and probably been severely punished by his own people.

"That man Decatur would be a splendid friend," said Hardy to Capt. Coote, of the *Borer*, "but I do not like him as an enemy."

"He does not know what defeat means."

"No; he is the most valiant man that ever trod a deck."

Such was the testimony borne by one of England's greatest admirals and indorsed by all with whom Decatur came in contact.

Among the British officers there were some, however, who hated the name of Decatur and took every opportunity to insult him and his fellow countrymen.

When the war broke out between England and the United States, an American citizen, who had been impressed into the British navy, went to Capt. Stackpole and asked for exemption, if the *Statira* should have to fight.

"You coward! you are afraid to fight," responded Stackpole.

"No, captain, you know I am not afraid. When the bullets fly fastest I am in my glory, but America is my own country and I cannot fight against it."

"You will have to do so, if we fall in with a Yankee

man-of-war, or you shall be tied to the mast and be shot at like a dog."

When the British fleet was in the Sound the young man's father asked Decatur to give him a flag of truce so that he might go on the enemy's ship and see his son, and by proving his right to American citizenship, get his discharge.

Decatur gave the required flag and a letter to Capt. Capel, who was then in temporary command of the blockading squadron.

When the boat containing the Massachusetts farmer, Hiram Thayer, neared the *Statira*, young Thayer saw it and recognized his father.

He rushed to the first lieutenant and impulsively, and almost hysterically, called out:

"It is my father; my own father; oh, lieutenant, let me speak to him and I shall die happy."

"The Yankee boat is coming here," answered the lieutenant.

Hiram Thayer mounted to the deck of the British ship and soon clasped his son in his arms.

"Oh, sir, this is my son, born on American soil—a citizen of the United States. Do not make him fight against his own family, his own country."

The farmer gave proofs and asked for his son's release.

With angry words Capt. Stackpole demanded to know by what right Thayer had to visit a British ship.

"I'll have you hung as a spy," he shouted, angrily.

"I bear a flag of truce."

"Rebels have no rights under such a flag. I would hang every Yankee who fell into my hands, if I had the chance."

"I have the permission of Capt. Capel——"

"It's a lie, a lie, you clodhopper, you rebel," shouted the British captain.

Thayer produced his authority, and the insulting Britisher had to acknowledge himself in the wrong.

"American or no American, that boy shall fight on this ship if we get into action."

"You would not have him fight against his own country?" pleaded the father.

"He shall fight against his own father if I so order."

But Capt. Stackpole was not in command of the squadron, and his superior reported to Admiral Hardy the facts in the matter, and in a few weeks Hiram Thayer was released from duty on the *Statira* and returned to his home.

The force of the enemy was too great for the Americans to break, and Decatur was penned up in New London for many months.

He was not inactive, for he helped Robert Fulton improve the Saybrook boy's invention of torpedoes, and with the help of Bushnell, the inventor, and Fulton, prepared such a plan of defense by torpedoes that would make any harbor practically impregnable.

But Decatur wanted to get to sea, and many times he tried, under cover of the night, to escape, but sometimes treachery and at others the extra vigilance of the British frustrated his designs.

Early in 1814 the command of the frigate *President* became vacant by the transfer of Commodore Rodgers to the *Guerriere*, then expected to be ready for sea in a few weeks.

The *President* was a faster ship than the *United States*, and Decatur gladly accepted the exchange, because he thought he would have a better chance of slipping out of the harbor of New York and meeting the enemy on the sea.

After a delay through the court-martial on the officers of the *Chesapeake*, which had recently been captured by the *Shannon*, he left New London, and removed to New York, accompanied by all his officers and crew, who rejoiced to think that they were permitted to share the fortunes of their loved leader.

CHAPTER XXXII.

GLORY EVEN IN DEFEAT.

Again Decatur was doomed to disappointment.

Once more he was condemned to inaction. The government believed that the enemy was about to make an attack on New York, and it was deemed essential to put all the approaches to the Empire City in as good a state for defense as possible, and no one was considered so well able to accomplish this as Commodore Decatur.

He was given a formidable force of five thousand men, specially enrolled for the defense of the harbor, including seamen of the navy in the ships and gunboats and sea fencibles—a species of naval militia.

Decatur set himself to work to drill the force in a way that men had never been drilled before.

He armed them with pikes, pistols and cutlasses, and maneuvered them in person to preserve a perfect line while charging with running speed, to be accompanied, when in contact with the enemy, with a terrific cheer.

But he was not destined to make use of the force, for the British, either through fear of a defeat, or through making the threat as a shield for their intended attacks on other places, did not attempt to land in New York.

They made attacks on Washington, burning and destroying the city like savages; then on Baltimore and New Orleans.

Decatur was left to pursue his own course and get out to sea when a chance offered.

His squadron consisted of the *President*, his flagship; the new sloop *Peacock*, Commander Lewis Warrington; the *Hornet*, Commander James Biddle; the

brigantine *Tom Bowline*, carrying stores for the squadron, and the fast sailing merchant brig *Macedonian*, also laden with stores.

It was Decatur's idea to get to the East Indies, where he believed he could inflict an injury on the valuable British trade in those seas, commensurate with that which Capt. Porter, in the *Essex*, had accomplished among the British whale fisheries of the Pacific Ocean.

Believing that he had a better chance of escape if he sailed alone, Decatur gave orders to Capt. Warrington to follow him as soon as possible, with the remaining ships, and stand for the Island of Tristan de Cunha, which he had assigned as his place of rendezvous.

On the fourteenth of January, 1815, he thought that his opportunity had come, for a terrific gale was blowing off shore, and he thought that the blockaders would be driven off their station.

He accordingly weighed anchor off Staten Island on the evening of that day and stood down the bay, accompanied by the store ship *Macedonian*.

The ship passed Sandy Hook with a fresh westerly breeze and rapid headway, and approached the bar about eight o'clock, when, the pilots having mistaken the channel, owing to the boats stationed as beacons to mark it having been improperly placed, the ship struck the ground, and, being heavily laden for a long cruise, continued to thump violently for nearly two hours, so as to become hogged, or broken-backed, and otherwise strained, besides breaking several of her rudder braces, displacing a portion of her false keel and otherwise receiving considerable injury.

Decatur wanted to put back into port for repairs, but the wind, which blew strongly out of the harbor rendered it impossible.

The only thing to be done was to force her over the bar before the tide fell, and by great exertions this was effected by ten o'clock, and the course shaped close

along the Long Island shore, in the expectation of passing inside the blockaders.

If the British had struggled effectively to keep their station as nearly as possible off the port, Decatur would have been right and could have slipped out to sea unnoticed.

But good luck favored the British. They drifted to the very point that Decatur thought they ought not to be, and, with the early dawn, three ships were descried right ahead, not more than two miles away, and standing east northeast on a wind.

Had it not been for that unlucky two hours on the bar the *President* would have been twenty miles outside of them.

Decatur ordered the helm put to starboard, and hauled the *President* by the wind on the larboard tack, with her head to the northward, toward the east end of Long Island.

By daylight four ships were discovered in chase under a press of sail; one on each quarter and two astern.

The leading ship was the *Majestic*, which soon after eleven o'clock was near enough to open fire on the *President*, a fire which was not returned.

The *Majestic* dropped astern, but the *Endymion*, a frigate of the heaviest class, had the advantage of the *President* in sailing and gradually gained on her.

It was a new experience for the *President*, however heavily laden, to be overtaken by any ship, but the serious injuries sustained on the bar had crippled her powers.

The sails of the *President* were kept wet from the royals down; the water was started in the hold, and then pumped out to lighten the ship, anchors and boats were cut away, cables cut up and thrown overboard, together with spare spars, provisions and everything that could be readily gotten rid of, save such things as pertained to the fighting department.

In everything luck was with the British.

Before the *President* could feel the breeze the *Endymion* was within a gunshot, when she commenced a fire from her bow guns, which the *President* returned from her stern chasers.

Both ships were steering east by north, with the wind on the larboard quarter.

In a short space of time the Britisher had obtained a position on the starboard quarter of the *President*, within a quarter of a mile, in which neither the stern nor quarter guns of the *President* could be brought to bear upon her, while the enemy kept up a very destructive fire from her larboard bow and bridle ports on the *President*.

Decatur saw that the struggle was almost hopeless, but did not wish to surrender.

His men were dropping around him unavenged, and with that grandeur of heroism which always characterized his actions, he called all his officers and men together and told them that the only thing to do was to board the enemy, scuttle the *President* and take the *Endymion* into New York bearing the Stars and Stripes.

"My lads," he said, "that ship is coming up with us. As our ship won't sail we'll go on board of theirs, every man and boy of us, and carry her into New York.

"All I ask of you is to follow me. This is a favorite ship of the country. If we allow her to be taken we shall be deserted by our wives and sweethearts.

"What! let such a ship as this go for nothing? 'Twould break the heart of every pretty girl in New York."

The whole crew responded by three hearty cheers, and every man and boy felt that to follow such a captain was a great honor.

Decatur ordered a howitzer to be pointed down the main hatch to scuttle the ship.

Everything was in readiness, and they only waited for the *Endymion* to close upon his starboard beam

sufficiently near for Decatur to sheer suddenly on board of the enemy.

But the cheers had been too loud, and the British captain heard them and suspected the plot.

He preferred his present to a broadside position, and neutralized his superior sailing by yawing, and occasionally firing a broadside.

Finding it impossible to get the enemy in a position to enable the *President* to sheer on board of her, and that the *President* was receiving the fire of the *Endymion* without the ability to return it, Decatur determined as his only resource to bear away from his present course of east by north to south, thus bringing the wind on the starboard quarter and the *Endymion* on the starboard beam.

He set all his starboard sails, so as to preserve as much as possible his distance from the pursuing squadron.

The *Endymion* bore away, also steering the same course as the *President*, and the two ships ran broadside to broadside, within effective musket shot, keeping up for two hours a heavy and most destructive fire from their great guns and musketry.

At the first broadside a thirty-two pound shot struck Licut. Babbitt below the right knee, severing the leg entirely. As he fell he staggered and went down the wardroom hatch, fracturing the thigh of his wounded limb in two places.

He survived for two hours, dictating farewell messages to his friends and to the young lady whom he was to marry at the end of the war.

Grieving over the loss of his efficient officer, Decatur was the more determined to save the ship for his country, but while standing on a shot box he received a wound in the chest, from a large splinter, which stunned him for several minutes.

The anxious seamen left their posts and gathered round him. They had lost all ambition, all hope, when

he fell. It mattered nothing to them then whether the *President* was captured or not, their whole souls were bound up in love for the fallen man.

But their grief was turned to joy as he opened his eyes and smiled on them.

"Back to your posts," he said, his voice little above a whisper. "Back to your posts, your country needs you!"

He rose and resumed his position as commander, but again he was wounded by a smaller splinter, which struck his face. The blood almost blinded him, but he, heedless of his wounds, gave his whole attention to the ship and to the annoyance of the enemy.

The battery was well served, and the marines fired as steadily as at target practice.

News was brought to Decatur that Lieut. Hamilton, his friend, had been killed.

That was the hardest blow in all the war; not once since the death of his brother at Tripoli had Decatur felt so grieved.

In many a ballroom had young Hamilton carried off the honors, in many a scene of fun had his expression, "Carry on, boys! carry on!" roused the mirth and excited the hearts of his fellows, and when the air was black with powder smoke and the bullets flew like hailstones around him, his cheery voice would be heard using the same expression:

"Carry on, boys! Carry on!"

He had commenced this favorite expression when, a grapeshot traversing his breast, voice and life were extinguished together.

After two hours the fire of the *Endymion* began to weaken, and in half an hour more, with her sails literally cut from the yards, and most of her larboard guns disabled or dismounted, she dropped dismantled out of the action.

"Well, we have whipped that ship, at any rate," ex-

claimed Fourth Lieut. Howell; then as a blaze flashed from her bow, he added: "No, there she is again!"

A grapeshot from the gun, the last the *Endymion* fired, struck the young lieutenant in the head and he dropped dead.

The *Endymion* being beaten out of action, Decatur wore ship with the *President*, and resumed his former course of east by north, under a press of sail, from royal studding sails down.

But Decatur's star was not in the ascendant, for though he had silenced the fastest of the pursuing ships, scarcely had the moon shed her bright silvery rays over the water than two British vessels loomed up within gunshot.

A frigate, which proved to be the *Pomone*, ranged up on the larboard side of the *President*, delivering her broadside, which killed and wounded a number of men on the *President*, and then took her place on the larboard bow of the *President* to prevent her escape.

The *Tenedos* at the same moment occupied a raking position on the *President's* starboard quarter, and the *Majestic*, accompanied by the brig *Despatch*, was closing up under her stern.

"It is all over," sighed Decatur, as he saw that there was no chance of successful resistance.

He had but one duty to perform. It was a sad and strange one for him.

He sent the crew below, out of reach of the enemy's fire, and then signaled, with his own hand, that he surrendered.

Decatur remained at his station.

Not hearing the hail, the *Pomone* poured another broadside into the *President*.

"She means to sink us," cried the commodore; "to your quarters, my lads, and renew your fire; we will die fighting, not like rats in a trap."

But before the guns could be made ready the *Po-*

mone discontinued her fire and the *President* was in the hands of the British.

Decatur was carried to the cockpit to seek relief from the wounds which were troubling him, and which had been neglected during the fight.

He had surrendered to a squadron. To no one vessel could the credit of capturing Decatur's ship be given. He had succumbed to numbers.

To the chief officer of the squadron he offered his sword, but that brave Englishman refused to receive it.

"You have won your right to keep it, for never did man defend a ship more nobly."

So Decatur rebuckled his sword belt and was proud to have won such an encomium from his enemies.

He was sent on the *Endymion* to Bermuda, and narrowly escaped being lost, for a furious gale in the Gulf Stream swept away the masts and endangered the ship. The captain threw overboard all his guns and every portable thing to lighten the ship.

When the *Endymion* at last reached Bermuda and it was known that Decatur was on board, one would have imagined that a conquering hero, instead of a prisoner, had reached the beautiful tropical isle.

Flags were flung to the breeze, houses were decorated and the people vied with one another to do honor to the gallant young commodore.

He had not been on the island two days before the senior naval officer called on him and told him that he could go to New London at any time he pleased and that a frigate should be placed at his disposal.

On board the British frigate *Narcissus*, treated with all the honors due to so valiant a man, Commodore Decatur returned to his native land, on parole.

As the *Narcissus* neared New London, Rear Admiral Sir Henry Hotham was lying off the port with his flag on board the *Superb*.

As the *Narcissus* saluted the flagship the admiral learned that Decatur was on board.

He signaled the *Narcissus* to wait his pleasure, and then he did a most courteous thing. He wrote a letter to Decatur, congratulating him on his return to America and informing him that peace had been agreed upon between Great Britain and the United States, and hoped that as they had been good enemies so they might be good friends. He inclosed a letter from Mrs. Decatur, which he had promised to have sent to Bermuda, before he knew of the commodore's return.

It was gratifying to all parties, and Decatur never forgot that among those with whom he had fought there were gallant gentlemen who were actuated with the same love of country as himself, though they fought under different flags.

Decatur's countrymen received him as a conqueror. They knew that he had only been defeated by a squadron, and that no single ship could ever have captured a United States vessel he commanded.

It was felt that he had won for himself a new wreath of glory.

The ship carpenters of New York volunteered to give sixteen hundred days' work as a contribution towards building for Stephen Decatur a frigate which should take the place of the *President*, which he had so valiantly defended.

As is usual when a war vessel is lost, a court-martial was held. The one which listened to the evidence concerning the loss of the *President* not only exonerated Decatur from all blame, but concluded its report with the statement: "That the conduct of Commodore Decatur, of his officers and crew, are highly honorable to them, and to the American navy, and deserves the warmest gratitude of their country."

The secretary of the navy, in transmitting the finding of the court to Decatur, added his own meed of praise and that of the President.

"You have, in every instance," wrote the secretary, "added luster to the stars of the Union; your brilliant

actions have raised the national honor and fame, even in the moment of surrendering your ship to an enemy's squadron of vastly superior force, over whose attack singly you were decidedly triumphant; and you will be pleased to present to each of your gallant officers and crew the thanks of your government for the brave defense of the ship and flag of the United States."

Such an eulogy softened the pangs of defeat and made him feel that all countries are not ungrateful.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

IMMORTALITY.

That the government had every confidence in Stephen Decatur was proved by the fact that on the very day the court-martial convened to inquire into the loss of the *President*, the secretary of the navy offered him in the command of the *Guerriere*, which was to be part of the first squadron to be dispatched to Algiers, or the command of the ship of line, *Washington*, of the second squadron, or the command of the Boston Navy Yard.

The Dey of Algiers had declared war against us, and it became necessary to teach him a lesson.

Congress ordered the *President* to equip and send out such force as might be requisite, and so two squadrons were formed, the one under the command of Commodore James Bainbridge, the other under Decatur.

The two commodores, with William Shaler, who had been our consul general at Algiers, comprised the commission empowered to negotiate a treaty with the dey, when peace should be proclaimed.

Again the gallant Decatur upheld the Stars and Stripes in the Mediterranean, gaining victory after victory, and compelling all to respect the American flag.

In the action with the Algerian frigate, *Mashouda*, commanded by the Grand Admiral Rais Hammida, Decatur won the esteem of even his barbarian enemies.

The first broadside fired at short distance created awful destruction on board the Algerine.

The heroic admiral, Rais Hammida, who had been wounded early in the action, refused to withdraw from his position in a sort of raised platform, like a pulpit,

on the quarter-deck, was literally cut in two by a forty-two pound shot from one of the *Guerriere's* carronades.

Two more broadsides were fired and many of the Algerians were cut down.

No signal of surrender had been made by the Algerine, but Decatur ordered the fire of the *Guerriere* to cease.

The enemy was valiant and brave. True, the Algerines were pirates, and barbarians, but they were vanquished, and were about to become his prisoners, and he would not allow a useless shedding of blood.

The United States fleet surrounded the *Mashouda*, and the frigate had to acknowledge defeat.

The scene on board was full of horror. The admiral and most of his officers were dead, the decks were slippery with blood, wounded men by the score lay in heaps writhing in agony, while those who were not wounded were calling on *Aliah* to kill them.

Decatur soon made them know that they were to be treated as human beings, and that mercy and love would mark his treatment of them.

With this victory fresh in the mind of the Algerines, the commissioners landed and presented to the dey the ultimatum of the President of the United States.

"We have the honor of offering terms to your excellency," said Decatur. "You can accept them or fight. We would rather have peace, but if you prefer war, we are ready to enforce our terms, which are only just and honorable, by the use of such weapons and ships as our country has placed at our disposal."

The dey at first treated the ultimatum with contempt, then hesitated, then asked for time to consider it, and finally signed his acceptance.

Peace was insured just forty-one days from the time the squadron left American waters.

It is not our purpose to tell in detail all the wonders

performed by Decatur in the Mediterranean before he returned home. It would be interesting to narrate how he demanded indemnity from the Bey of Tunis for violations of the treaty, and how he made the Bashaw of Tripoli acknowledge the majesty of the Stars and Stripes.

Our purpose has been to show how a youth, by his own energies, by his valor, honor and worth, rose from midshipman to commodore, and how he made the name of the United States respected all the world over, causing the barbarian, as well as the Frenchman and Englisman, to acknowledge that under the Stars and Stripes were men who knew what patriotism meant and who were ready to give their lives for their country.

It is sad to think that this bright life was snuffed out by the shot of a fellow countryman.

At the early age of forty-one he was forced into a duel with Commodore Barron.

Decatur announced that he should not take his opponent's life, but no such chivalrous resolve actuated Barron, who was filled with jealous hate.

The duel took place and the shot fired by Commodore Barron robbed the nation of one of the founders of the navy, and one of the most skillful commanders that ever trod a deck.

Decatur had achieved a greatness which will last as long as the history of his country is read.

He made friends in the ranks of former enemies, and met his death, not in the glorious defense of his flag, but in the mistaken idea then prevalent that differences and fancied insults should be wiped out on the so-called field of honor.

No better conclusion can be made to this true story than the words which are graven on the stone which marks the last resting place of the glorious Stephen Decatur:

"His public services are recorded in the annals of his country; his private virtues in the heart of his friends, and above all in her heart who was for fourteen years the happy partner of his life and the delighted witness of his exalted worth, and who can with truth inscribe upon this tablet that he possessed every virtue of which the human character is susceptible, and each carried to its highest perfection."

Such eulogy, so well deserved, should animate every reader of it to remember that, next to religion, the noblest passion which can occupy the breast of man is that of love of country.

If ever the dogs of war are again let loose, we doubt not that the spirit of Decatur will dwell in many a heart, and with one voice all will swear to uphold the Stars and Stripes over land or sea wherever it may be threatened.

"Let brave Columbia's noble band,
With hearts united rise,
Swear to protect their native land,
Till sacred freedom dies."

That was the spirit which actuated Decatur, and such will again animate the hearts of all should danger menace our loved land.

THE END.

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